A Workman's Confessions

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A

WORKMAN'S CONFESSIONS

BY

EMILE SOUVESTRE

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A WORKMAN'S CONFESSIONS.

CHAPTER I.

A CHILD OF THE FAUBOURGS.

AS far back as I can remember I recall living with my father and mother in a house of two stories in the Rue de Château-Landon, near the Barrière des Vertus.

On the ground-floor lodged, all alone, an old-clothes merchant who did his business during the day, returned in the evening, never spoke to any one, made no noise, and lived as quietly as a dead man in his grave.

Above the clothes-seller dwelt Mother Cauville, an excellent woman, who was a poor widow with three children. While her husband lived all were well supported, but at his death "her legs lacked to carry them," as the good woman said, and it was necessary to go upon her courage. The brave woman, harnessed to a hand-cart, set herself to hawking

vegetables through the streets; the oldest daughter bought a large basket and peddled the fruits of the season, and the son became a roving chair-mender. The little Rose, then eight years of age, stayed at home and kept house. At first they suffered much misery. They measured the mouthfuls, they blew upon their fingers to warm them, they slept upon straw; but, little by little, the earnings of the mother and the two children had increased; the farthings grew to pieces of fifteen sous; they were able to have a mattress, to light a stove, and enlarge the loaf of bread. Rose, in her spare moments, made sulphur matches, which her sister sold, and knit stockings for all the family. When I quitted the house these brave people had furniture, Sunday clothes, and a credit at the baker's.

The recollection of the Cauvilles has always remained with me as proof of what the least resources can produce when improved by perseverance and hearty good-will. It is by the sum of little efforts that one reaches great results; each one of our fingers is a little thing, but united they form the hand with which one raises houses and pierces mountains.

The habitation of my parents was above that of Mother Cauville; above us were only the cats and the sparrows.

The better part of my time was passed in chasing this small game or rambling in the faubourg. We were a dozen youngsters, better furnished with appetites than shoes, who spent our time together in the streets. Every thing afforded us amusement: the snow of winter, which was the occasion of great battles; the water in the gutters, which we dammed, turning the street into a pond; the meager sods growing upon still unoccupied grounds, with which we built forts or mills. In these works, as in our childish plays, I was neither the strongest nor wisest; but I hated injustice, and this made me the chosen arbiter in all quarrels. The condemned party sometimes revenged the decision of the judge by thrashing him; but, far from giving me a distaste for my impartiality, the blows confirmed it; it was like the nail well placed, the more it is struck the deeper it is driven.

The same instinct inclined me to do only that which I believed permissible and to say only that which I knew. I suffered for it more

than once, above all in the adventure with the chestnut vender.

He was a peasant who often traversed our quarter with a donkey laden with fruit and nuts, and stopped at the lodging of a fellow-countryman who lived opposite our house. Wine-drinking often prolonged his visit, and, grouped before the donkey, we regarded his burden with envious eyes. One day the temptation was too strong. The donkey bore a sack, through a hole in which we could see the fine, glistening chestnuts, which had the appearance of putting themselves at the window to provoke our greediness. The boldest lad winked knowingly, and one proposed enlarging the hole. The thing was deliberated; I was the only one to oppose. As the majority made the law they proceeded to the execution, when I threw myself before the sack, crying that no one should touch it. I wished to give reasons to support my position, but a fist-blow closed my mouth. I struck back, and a general scuffle resulted which was my Waterloo. Overwhelmed by numbers, I drew, in my downfall, the sack which I defended, and the peasant, whom the noise of the strife had attracted,

found me under the feet of the donkey in the midst of his scattered chestnuts. Seeing my adversaries fleeing, he divined what they had wished to do, took me for their accomplice, and, without more enlightenment, set himself to punishing me for the theft which I had prevented. I protested in vain; the vender believed that he avenged his merchandise, and had, otherwise, drunk too much to understand. I escaped from his hands bruised, bloody, and furious.

My companions did not fail to rail at my scruples so badly recompensed; but I had an obstinate will; instead of being discouraged I became still more set in my way. After all, if my bruises were painful they did not make me ashamed, and the mockers at my conduct esteemed me for it. This confirmed me. I have often thought since that in beating me the chestnut man had rendered me, without knowing it, the service of a friend. Not alone had he instructed me that it is necessary to do good for the good, not for the recompense, but he had also furnished the occasion for showing a character. I there began, thanks to him, a reputation which later I wished to continue;

for if good renown is a recompense it is also a check; the good which others think of us obliges us more often to merit it.

Aside from honesty I had, for the rest, all the defects of a street education. No one took care for me, and I grew, like the way-side herbs, by the grace of God. My mother was occupied all the day with the care of housekeeping, and my father entered the home only in the evening after work. I was for both only a mouth the more to feed. They wished to see me live and not to suffer; their foresight went no further; it was their manner of loving. Want, which always kept near the threshold, sometimes pushed the door and entered, but I do not recall having felt it. When the bread was short they at first considered my hunger; father and mother lived from the rest as they could.

Another recollection of the same period is that of our Sunday walks outside the Barrier. We used to go and sit in some great hall full of people who drank noisily and who often came to blows. I recall still the efforts of my mother and myself to hinder my father from taking part in these quarrels. We often took

him away disfigured, and always with great trouble; so these were for me days of torture and fright. One circumstance had rendered them still more odious. I had a little sister named Henriette, a blonde little creature as large as your fist, who slept near me in an osier cradle. I was fond of this innocent being, who laughed on seeing me and extended its little arms. The Sunday visits beyond the Barrier displeased her still more than me; her cries irritated my father, who often gave way to maledictions against her. One day, weary of her tears, he wished to take her; but he was already slightly drunk; the baby slipped from his hands and fell head-first. As we returned they gave her to me to carry. My father rejoiced in having quieted her, and I, who felt her head balancing upon my shoulder, believed she slept. Yet every now and then she uttered a feeble plaint. Reaching home, they put her in bed, and every body slept; but the next day I was awakened by loud cries. My mother held Henriette upon her knees, while my father regarded them with crossed arms and lowered head. Little sister had died during the night. Without well comprehend-

ing then what had made her die, I connected her death with our walks outside the Barrier, and this made me hate them still more. After an interruption of some weeks my father wished to resume them, but my mother refused to follow him, and I was thus delivered.

I was ten years old, and yet no one had thought of giving me any schooling. In this the indifference of my parents was supported by the counsels of Mauricet. Mauricet had always been the best friend of my family. A mason, like my father, and from the same province, he had, beyond the influence which old relations give, that which results from a probity without stain, from a proved capacity, and from his well-to-do condition acquired by order and work. They repeated at our house, "Mauricet has said it," as the lawyers repeat, "It is the law." Now Mauricet had a horror of the printed letter.

"What good is it to twist your son in the alphabet?" he often said to my father. "Have I had need of the black book of the schools to make my way? It is neither the pen nor the inkstand, it is the trowel and the mortar-bed, which make the good workman. Wait two

years more; then you shall give Peter Henry to me, and, if the devil doesn't interfere, we shall make him take well to the ashlar and the mortar."

My father highly approved; in regard to my mother, she had preferred putting me at school in the hope of seeing me with the little silver cross which the best scholars wore; yet she renounced without much trouble the pride of making me learned; and I should still know how neither to read nor write if the good God had not himself interfered in the matter.

CHAPTER II.

THE LITTLE SILVER CROSS.

OUR friend Mauricet not only worked for others as master-journeyman, but for some time he had attempted little enterprises on his own account which had brought him not a little money and stimulated him to further ventures. Some one spoke to him of a job of masonry for a citizen of Versailles who had before employed him. He mentioned it at our house, and my mother counseled him to write to the man; but Mauricet had a decided repugnance for correspondence; he declared that he would like better to wait until Sunday and then go afoot to Versailles to settle the business. Unhappily, another was more diligent; when he returned to us the Monday following he informed us that the man had signed the contract the evening before his visit. He regretted that Mauricet came too late, as he would have accorded the preference to him. It was a profit of some

hundreds of francs lost because of the lack of a letter. The master-journeyman detested paper and ink only the more, which, according to him, always gave the advantage to the intriguers over the good workmen. Of course, it is understood that in the eyes of Mauricet the good workman was he who knew how neither to read nor write.

But my mother drew from the accident altogether another lesson ; she concluded that it was good even for a workman to know how to put "the black upon the white," and she spoke of sending me to school. My father, who had not thought about the matter at all, made no opposition. A whole year passed without my taking either to reading or writing. I always had in my mind what I had heard Father Mauricet say, and I considered the instruction of the school as a luxury of which, so far as I was concerned, I could have no need. It was necessary for me to value it to understand what service it could be.

We were then, if I recollect rightly, in the year 1806. One evening at the letting out of school I saw twenty workmen standing before a great placard pasted to a wall. One of them

tried to spell it out, but without the ability to decipher even the title. We had among us a little hunchback named Pierrot, who was the wisest of the school and who read books as readily as the others could play upon the sabot. Seeing the silver cross with the tri-colored ribbon which he wore upon his breast, the workmen called him. One of them took him in his arms so that he could see the placard. He set himself to reading it in his little, bird-like voice:

"BULLETIN OF THE FRENCH ARMY.
Victory over the Prussians at Jena."

It was a recital of the battle, with the history of the five French battalions which the Prussians had not been able to cut through and of the five Prussian battalions which the French cavalry had scattered like a skein of flax. Pierrot read this with as proud an air as if he had been general-in-chief, and the workmen with their eyes fixed upon him drank in his words. When he stopped the more hurried cried, "Next! Next!" and the others replied, "Give him time; he must at least catch his breath. The little citizen reads

well! Come, my jewel, you were at the charge of Marshal Davoust!" And all were quiet again to hear Pierrot.

The reading finished, other passers arrived. The little hunchback was obliged to begin over again. Of him who had habitually been treated with mockery every body now spoke with consideration; one would have said that he was of some account for the glorious news that he had made known. Every one was obliged to him; they addressed him caressing and encouraging words, while on us they imposed silence and kicks; the hunchback had become king to all of us.

This impressed me as the adventure of Mauricet had impressed my mother. Without reasoning the thing, I felt that it was good sometimes to know. The little triumph of Pierrot had given me the taste for the black letter. I cannot say that I took a resolution, but from the next day I became more attentive to the lessons. Some eulogies of M. Saurin, my master, encouraged this good disposition and my first progress served to give me courage.

At the end of the second year I knew how

to read and write. M. Saurin began to give me lessons in arithmetic. These lessons were only accorded to the favorite scholars. They took them in a certain little room where there was a blackboard, upon which M. Saurin gave his demonstrations. The uninitiated were forbidden to approach this sanctuary. The room with the blackboard was for them like Bluebeard's chamber. M. Saurin taught us the four rules with as much solemnity as if he had instructed us how to make gold, and perhaps, after all, he made us understand a science as precious. I have often thought that the knowledge of arithmetic was the greatest gift which one man could make another. Intelligence is very much, love of work much more, perseverance still more; but without arithmetic all that is like a tool which strikes in the empty air. To calculate is to find the connection there is between effort and result—that is to say, between cause and effect. He who does not calculate goes by chance: in advance he does not know if he takes the best way; afterward he is ignorant if he has taken it. Arithmetic is in industrial things like conscience in things moral: it is only after

one has consulted it that he can see clearly and feel easy. Experience has many times proved to me this which I say, both for others and for myself.

Thanks to the lessons of M. Saurin, I was very soon able to cipher and to resolve all the questions which he placed upon the black-board. After the departure of Pierrot I was at the head of the class; the little silver cross no more quitted my patched vest. I had done like Napoleon, I was passed emperor for all time to come.

CHAPTER III.

WIDOW AND ORPHAN.

ONE winter evening M. Saurin kept me later than usual to solve problems; I did not return home until after nightfall. On arriving I found the door closed! It was the hour that my father habitually returned and when my mother prepared the supper. I could not comprehend what had become of them; I sat down on the stairs to wait.

I was there some time when Rose, descending, perceived me. I asked her if she knew why our door was closed; but instead of responding to me she remounted with a frightened look, and I heard her cry on re-entering her apartment, "Peter Henry is there." Some reply was made, then there were hurried whisperings; finally Mother Cauville appeared at the top of the stairs and invited me in a very friendly voice to come up to her room. She was just sitting down at table with her children, and wished me to partake of

their supper. I said that I would wait for my mother.

"She has gone out—on business," said the widow, with a hesitating air; "very likely she will not return soon. Eat and drink, my poor Peter; this you will be sure of."

I took a place near Rose; every body kept silence save Mother Cauville, who pressed me to eat; but, without knowing why, I had a pang at the heart. I kept listening to hear any one who might come up the stair-way, and I looked every moment toward the door.

The meal ended, they gave me a chair near the fire; the Cauvilles stood around me, but said nothing. This silence, these cares, finished by frightening me; I got up crying that I wished to see my mother.

"Wait, she will come back," said the widow.

I asked where she was.

"Well, then," resumed Mother Cauville, "she is at the hospital."

"Is she sick, then?"

"No; she has gone with your father, who has had an accident at the building-yard."

I declared that I wished to rejoin them, but the vegetable-seller opposed me. She

pretended ignorance of which hospital the wounded man had been carried to, and argued, besides, that they would not admit me. I was obliged then to wait. My heart seemed as if in a vise, and I choked. Every body else seemed affected in the same way. We were seated around the fire, which crackled softly; outside might be heard the rain and the cold wind rattling upon the dilapidated roof of the old house. At this moment a dog set to barking toward the open fields of Pantin, and, without knowing why, I began to weep. Mother Cauville let me alone, saying nothing, as if she did not wish to give me hope in consoling me.

Finally, late in the evening, we heard heavy steps upon the stairs. The neighbor and her children ran to the door. I got up trembling and looked toward the entrance; my mother appeared. She was dripping with rain. Her face, spotted with mud and blood, had an expression which I had never seen. She advanced as far as the hearth without saying any thing and fell upon a chair. We could see that she wished to speak, for her lips moved, but without utterance.

I threw myself against her and pressed her in my arms. The vegetable-seller finally asked her for news of Jerome.

"Well, then, I have told you," stammered my mother, in a voice almost unintelligible, "the doctor told us immediately—he only had time to recognize me—he gave me his watch—and then—all was over!"

The neighbor wrung her hands; her children looked at each other; as for me, I had not well comprehended; I began crying that I wished to go to the hospital where my father was. At this demand the poor woman straightened herself and, seizing me with both hands, shook me with a kind of insane anger.

"Your father! unhappy one!" she said, "but you have one no more! Understand well, you have one no more!"

I looked at her with fright; this idea could not enter my mind; I continued to repeat that I wished to see my father.

"Do you not understand, then, that he is dead?" interrupted Mother Cauville, harshly.

This enlightened me. I had seen my little sister; I knew what death was. This word connected itself in my memory with many

frightful images—a winding-sheet, a nail-studded coffin, a hole dug in the earth! I began crying and sobbing. They drew me from my mother and led me to our lodging.

I recall nothing that followed. When I saw my mother the next day she was in bed; she seemed to me better than the evening before, because her paleness had left her; they told me that she had the fever. Friend Mauricet came during the day to see her; but they sent me away while he talked with her. The next day he returned, seeking me for the burial. I had on my best clothes, and they attached a black crape to my hat. There were no more than six or eight to follow the hearse, which surprised me. My father was put into the public grave-yard. Mauricet immediately bought a wooden cross, which he planted himself at the place where they had buried him. I returned with red eyes, but with a heart already solaced. I was like most children, with whom grief does not last long.

On leaving the cemetery Friend Mauricet returned with me to my mother's dwelling. At sight of us she burst into tears, for our return announced to her that her companion of twenty

years was forever gone; but Mauricet was displeased.

"Now, Madeleine," said he, with a gruffness through which one felt the friendship, "this is not reasonable of you. Jerome is, like you, where the good God has put him! Each one has his duty to do—he to repose and you to work and take courage. Here is a poor lad who has need of you; see if he is not another Jerome; he resembles him already as one sou another."

He had pushed me toward my mother, who embraced me, sobbing.

"Enough," he resumed, drawing me away at the end of some minutes; "wipe your eyes. Come, close the fountain of your heart. You are a brave one, my widow; the question is to prove it. What do you propose to do now? Let us speak of this; it is the most pressing?"

My mother replied that she knew of nothing, that she did not see any means of living, that nothing was left to her but begging at the doors.

"Don't say such stupidities!" exclaimed Mauricet, disapprovingly. "Is this an idea which ought to come to the widow of a work-

man? If you have hands to beg you have them as well to work, perhaps! One cannot believe that you fear work, you whom I always cite to my daughter and wife. Does any one know better how to economize? Is there a better laundress in the quarter? But is it necessary for me to recall to you the ability of your fingers?"

These praises raised the spirits of my mother a little, who consented to seek with Mauricet for something to do. The mason already had his plans, which he made her accept with the air of leaving the honor to the widow.

It was agreed that she should set up a lodging-house for young men, while I entered a certain building-yard as mason's helper. Mauricet promised to watch over all, and if, in the beginning, the profits did not suffice, he engaged himself, in his slang of the faubourg, "to put a little butter in the spinach."

CHAPTER IV.

ON HOLY MONDAY.

IN making me accept the place of mason's helper Father Mauricet said to me:

"You have made a beginning, Peter Henry; be a truly good helper if you wish some day to become a true workman. In our trade, you see, it is as in the fashionable world; the best valets make the best masters. Go ahead, then, and if some journeyman hustles you, accept the thing in good part; at your age the shame is not in receiving a kick, but of meriting it."

The recommendation was not useless, considering the manners and usages of the trade. In all times the mason has had the right of treating his helper paternally—that is to say, of thrashing him for his education. I was put at the orders of a Limousin, who had kept, in this regard, the old traditions. At the least awkwardness the blows rained upon me with a stream of maledictions like the thunder and

showers of April. I was at first stunned; but I set myself quickly to understand the work and soon "served with precision," as Friend Mauricet said.

At the end of a month I was the best helper in the stone-yard. The Limousin was just enough not to hold ill-will against me. He continued to punish me upon occasion for my awkwardness, but without seeking pretexts; the man was brutal and not wicked. His severity seemed to him a right, and he struck the helper who erred as the judge applies the law, without hate against the condemned.

Although a little rough, my new trade did not displease me. It permitted me to display my strength and agility. Mauricet did not fail to remark them, and they soon gave me a reputation among the journeymen. I applied myself to sustain it with redoubled zeal. Good fame is, at the same time, a recompense and a chain; if it profits one it pledges him; it is like advance money received from the public, and which obliges one to do his duty. I had succeeded in obtaining the good-will of all the workmen in the yard by my good-will.

This enabled me to learn the trade more rapidly and with less effort than many of my fellows, some of whom never came to know it at all. The lessons which were refused them, and which they were obliged, so to speak, to steal, were given to me with readiness. I became the student of all the journeymen; each one of them made it a point of honor to teach me something. They permitted me to attempt the easier work and directed my efforts. Mauricet, especially, always had an eye upon me; he spared neither counsel nor encouragement.

"You see, Peter Henry," he repeated to me continually, "a mason is like a soldier; he should do honor to the regiment of the trowel. The architect is our general—he makes the plan of the battle; but it is for us to gain it in bravely working the mortar and the stone, as the troopers over there in Germany work the enemy. The true workman thinks not alone of his account at the baker's. He loves the work of his hands; it is his glory. I have never placed the cap-sheaf upon a gable without feeling something. The houses in which I have had a hand become, as one might say,

my children; when I see them they rejoice my eyes; it seems to me that the tenants are a little obliged to me, and I am interested in them. When I speak of this there are those who sneer and regard me as an antediluvian; but the good workmen comprehend me and agree with my sentiment. Believe me, also, little one, if you wish to have your place among the best fellows, put heart in the handle of your trowel. It is only this which can make the master-journeyman."

These encouragements and my ambition so much hastened my progress that I found myself prepared to take the rank of workman at an age when one generally becomes an apprentice. Such success made me giddy; raised too soon from the dependence which until then I had endured, I abused an authority which I had not learned how to exercise. My helper was the worst-treated in the yard. Mauricet warned me two or three times.

"Take care, youngster," he said, with his customary familiarity; "you have yet only milk teeth; if you bite too hard you will break them!"

His prophecy was fulfilled to the letter, for

one fine day my servant, tired of my bad treatment, rebelled in earnest and served me like the plaster which he had the habit of preparing. I carried more than a month the marks of this correction, too well merited, and which profited me. Straightened upon this side, I let myself fall upon another.

Some of the journeymen of the stone-yard devoutly kept "Holy Monday," and had tried many times to lead me with them. I resisted, at first, without much trouble. Recollections of the Barrier could not make me laugh. They attacked me with railleries; they declared that I feared being whipped by my mother, that I was not yet weaned, and that the brandy burned my throat. These silly sayings piqued me. I wished to prove that I was no longer a child by conducting myself badly as a man. Drawn outside the Barrier the next pay-day, and supplied with the wages of a fortnight, I remained there until all of it had passed from my own pocket into the wine-seller's drawer.

Sunday and Monday had been employed in this long debauch. I returned home the evening of the second day without hat, covered with mud, and my body bruised by all the

walls of the faubourg. My mother, ignorant of what had happened, believed me wounded or dead; she had sought me at the morgue at first, then at the hospital. I found her with Mauricet, who was trying to re-assure her. The sight of me eased her inquietude, but not her pain. After the first joy of recovering me came the grief of seeing me in such a state. Reproaches succeeded the lamentations. I was so inebriated that I scarcely heard and failed to comprehend. The tone alone informed me that I was being reproved. Like most intoxicated persons, I was in a glorious mood, and regarded myself for a quarter of an hour as one of the kings of the world. I answered by imposing silence on the good woman, and declaring that I should henceforth live after my own inclinations. My mother raised her voice, I shouted louder yet, and the quarrel grew bitter, when Father Mauricet put a stop to it. He declared it was not a time to talk, and made me go to bed without any remark. I slept soundly until the next day.

When I opened my eyes in the morning I recalled all that had passed, and I felt a little shame, mingled with much embarrassment.

However, self-conceit hindered my repentance. After all, I was master of the money gained by my work; I could dispose of my time; no one had any right to gainsay it, and I resolved to cut short all remarks.

The thought of my mother alone disturbed me. Wishing to avoid her reproaches, I got up quietly and left without seeing her.

When I arrived at the stone-yard I found the others already at work; but they appeared not to notice me. I set to work in bad enough humor, but with nonchalance. These two days of debauch had taken away from me all taste for my trade. Besides, I felt an inward humiliation which I hid under an air of bravado. I listened to what the other workmen said, always fearing to hear some joke or some unpleasant judgment on my account. When the contractor arrived I feigned not seeing him, and I avoided speaking to him for fear he would ask the cause of my absence the day before. I had lost that good conscience which had hitherto made me look the world fearlessly in the face. I felt in my life now a recollection to hide.

Those who had accompanied me to the

Barrier had not yet returned; the contractor remarked it.

"It is an infirmity which they have," said the wag of the yard. "When they work, by chance, they swallow so much plaster that at least three days are required to rinse their throats with wine."

All the journeymen set to laughing; but it seemed to me that there was in this laugh a sort of scorn. I reddened, involuntarily, as if the pleasantry had been made for me. New to the experience, I still felt scruples and remorse.

The day passed sadly enough. The sort of ill-feeling which affected all my members was communicated to my spirit. I was tired, inside and out.

While we worked Father Mauricet did not say a word to me; but at the hour of going home he came to me and said that we would go together. As he lodged at the other end of Paris I asked him if he had any business in our quarter.

"We shall see," he briefly responded.

I wished to follow my ordinary road; but he took me by other streets without saying

why, until we had reached a certain house in the Faubourg St. Martin; there he stopped.

"Do you see the high chimney which rises over the gable of this house, and which I call Jerome's chimney? It is there that your father was killed!"

I trembled violently, and looked at the fatal chimney with a kind of horror mixed with anger.

"Ah! it was there," I repeated in a tremulous voice. "You were there, Father Mauricet?"

"I was there."

"And how did the thing happen?"

"Not by the fault of the building, nor by the fault of the trade," replied Mauricet. "The scaffold was well-established, the work without danger; but your father had come there on leaving the Barrier. His sight was bleared, his legs unsteady; he mistook empty space for a plank, and he was killed without excuse."

I felt the blood mount to my face and my heart beat violently.

"Father Jerome had been a good workman," resumed Mauricet, "if the love of drink

had not undone him. Because of long sitting at the wine-seller's he had weakened his strength, his skill, and his mind. But, bah! one only lives once, as some one says; it is necessary to amuse one's self before his burial. If the widows and the orphans are hungry and cold afterward they can go to the Bureau of Charity and blow upon their fingers. Say, is this not your opinion?"

Then he began to sing a Bacchic refrain in vogue at the time:

"Let us fill ourselves with good drink.
When one knows good wine he knows all."

I was humiliated, confused, and I did not know what to say. I well felt that Mauricet did not speak seriously. But to approve him made me ashamed; to contradict him was to condemn myself. I lowered my head without saying any thing. Yet he continued to gaze at this cursed gable.

"Poor Jerome!" resumed Mauricet, changing his voice to a tenderer tone; "if he had not followed bad examples when he was young we should still have him with us. Madeleine would rest her old body, and you—you would

have had some one to show you the way. But no, there is nothing left of him, not even a good memory, for one regrets only the good workmen. When the wretched man was crushed upon the pavement do you know what the sub-contractor said? 'One more drunkard the less! Take him away and sweep the walk.'"

I could not restrain a movement of indignation.

"Well, he was a hard one," continued Mauricet. "He esteemed men only for what they were worth. If death had taken a good workman he would have said, 'This is a pity!' After all, at the bottom every one felt like him, and the proof is the number of friends who followed the body of Jerome to the grave. Those with whom he had caroused turned their backs upon him when he was in his coffin; for these worthless fellows, you see, while they associate together do not love each other."

I listened, meantime, without replying. We had resumed our walk. At the first crossing Mauricet stopped, and, pointing to the chimney which stood high above the roofs, "When you wish to resume your life of yesterday," he

said, "look at it first from this side, and the wine which you drink shall taste of blood!"

He went his way and left me filled with distress.

I re-entered my mother's house much troubled, without wishing to appear so. I struggled against the lesson which I had received. I revolted internally against feeling so shaken. I swore silently not to recede, and to continue to lead a jovial life. I sought all the more to fortify myself in my impenitence that I expected the reproaches of Madeleine. Prepared to cut them short by a declaration of independence, I entered our poor dwelling with a high head and a deliberate step.

Mother had the supper-table ready and received me as usual. This kindness disconcerted all my resolutions. I felt myself so much distressed with the consciousness of my fault that if I had not made an effort I should have wept. My mother had the air of seeing nothing. (I have since learned that Mauricet gave her the lesson.) She also talked cheerfully, as was her custom, not speaking of the fortnight's wages which I had appropriated for the first time, and appearing not at all disturbed. I went to bed

completely disarmed, and my heart stung with remorse. All night long I dreamed I saw my father tottering on the scaffold or being crushed on the pavement. I found myself intoxicated high up upon a cornice, suspended in mid-air and about to fall. When I got up the next day my head was heavy and all my limbs ached.

However, I began working at the ordinary hour. It was another bad day. I was less stunned than the day before, but more sad. To embarrassment had succeeded regret. It was nearly a week before I regained my accustomed vigor and spirits. The first time that Mauricet heard me singing he passed near me and, slapping me on the shoulder, "Contentment has returned to the house," he said to me. "That is right, laddie. Guard well the bird there."

"Fear nothing," I responded, laughing; "we shall make him a pretty cage where he shall find something to eat."

"See, above all, that he shall not have too much to drink," replied Mauricet.

We exchanged looks, and he passed, whistling.

Thirty-three years have gone by since that day, and I have never forgotten the promise

which I then made to myself. Exposed to all the temptations of intemperance, I have finished by no more caring for them. In the good, as well as in the bad, it is the first steps which decide the road. A habit is sometimes impossible to vanquish, but nearly always easy to avoid.

CHAPTER V.

MOTHER MADELEINE.

SINCE I had earned journeyman's wages my home had become more comfortable. We had been able to return to our old lodging. The furnishings which it became necessary to sell at my father's death had been replaced. We had decidedly risen in life, and the neighbors already looked upon us as rich.

All went well until the time when my mother began to complain of her eye-sight, which had decreased, little by little, without the dear woman's noticing it, or, rather, without wishing to confess it to herself. She always had a pretext. To-day it was the smoke, to-morrow the mist, the day following a catarrh in the head. It was not until after ten years that she bethought herself that her eyes were at fault. She no longer distinguished minute objects; it was necessary to give up the knife. I began to be disturbed. Mauricet, with whom I counseled, proposed consulting an oculist for whom

he had worked and with whom he was acquainted.

We had great trouble to persuade my mother, who, never having been sick, would not believe in doctors. At last, however, she consented.

The oculist was a man of middle age, tall, thin, and superbly calm. He looked at the eyes of my mother, said not a word, and wrote a prescription which he gave to me. I very much wished a word to re-assure me; but as others were waiting their turn I dared say nothing, and we were obliged to leave as we had come. Yet at the door I perceived that Mauricet had not followed. More bold with the oculist, he had stopped without doubt to question him. We waited for him some minutes at the bottom of the staircase, where he at last rejoined us.

"Well, then, what did your charlatan say?" asked my mother, who could not pardon the doctor his silent coldness.

"He orders you to eat roast meat and to sleep upon both ears," responded Mauricet.

"But is he sure of the cure?" I demanded.

"Has he not given you a paper?" replied the mason.

"Here it is."

"Then do what he has written there and let the water run under the Pont Neuf."

The accent of Mauricet had a brevity about it which struck me; but I could say nothing at the moment. He took the arm of the dear woman, to whom he told a hundred stories on the way. Never had I seen him so talkative. However, when we had reached home I drew him aside to say that I wished to speak to him.

"I also," he replied, in a low voice. "When I go out follow me."

My mother had already resumed her duties about the house. Mauricet did not delay his leave-taking, and I followed him.

As we descended the stairs I uneasily demanded of him what he wished to say to me.

"Wait until we are in the street," he replied.

Arriving there, he walked a few steps without speaking. I could wait no longer.

"In the name of God, Mauricet, what did the oculist say to you?" I demanded, with anguish.

He turned toward me.

"What did he say to me? Your doubts are well founded," he resumed, quickly. "He

believes that Mother Madeleine will become blind."

I cried out; but he continued, almost as if in anger:

"Come, come! the question is not of exclamations. Let us talk quietly, like men."

"Blind!" I repeated; "and what will become of her? How shall I find her a companion? Who will care for her?"

"Ah, see here," said Mauricet; "it is clear that something must be done, and that is why I have spoken of the thing. A blind old woman will be a heavy burden for a young man. It is for you to see if you find it too heavy."

I looked at him with a questioning air.

"Well, yes, yes," he continued, in response to my look; "you can discharge yourself from it if you are so disposed. There are retreats for poor, incurable people."

"Where is that?"

"At the hospital."

"Do you want me to put my mother with the beggars?" I exclaimed.

"Parbleu! Are you going to play the senator?" said Mauricet, without regarding me. "Those higher up than Madeleine go there—

true ladies who have had servants and carriages."

"Then it is because they do not have sons."

"That may or may not be," continued the mason, shrugging his shoulders. "Sons are under no more obligations than mothers, and there are not a few who carry their babes to the foundling asylum."

"But it isn't mine," I interrupted, quickly. "Mine carried me in her arms while I was little. She nourished me with her milk and with her bread. I have grown like a vine against the wall of her love; and now that the wall has cracks shall I let another sustain it? No, no, Father Mauricet, you cannot have believed that. If the good woman truly loses her sight, well, there remains mine. Between the two there will only be an eye apiece; but, in fault of better, we will be content."

"You say this from the heart," observed Mauricet; "but it is necessary to reflect with coolness. Consider that it is a clog which you rivet to your feet. Good-bye liberty, the economies, marriage even, for it will be a long time before you can earn enough to undertake a family with such a cipher."

"A cipher!" I repeated, scandalized. "You deceive yourself, Mauricet. She will give me contentment and courage. When I was born I was also a cipher for the poor creature, and yet she received me willingly. Be very sure that I know to what I engage myself, and that I have not my head in my heart, as you appear to believe. I find the trial hard, and I would have wished not to support it; but, since it has come, let God punish me if I fail to do my duty to the end!"

Here Mauricet, who had not yet looked at me, turned quickly and took me by both hands.

"You are a truly good workman!" he cried, with a brightening face. "I wished to see what was in you and if the foundations were solid. Now I am content. Away with the sham! Let us talk with open hearts."

"But did the oculist really think that there was no remedy?" I asked.

"That is his opinion," replied Mauricet. "Yet, as I left him, he said that perhaps there was hope of delaying the evil if the good woman could live in the country and take the air at will, with the verdure under her eyes."

I interrupted him, saying I would send her there.

"That will be difficult," objected Mauricet; "in living separately your expenses will be almost doubled, and I fear that the cords of your purse are not as long as your good wishes."

But the uncertain hope given by the doctor preoccupied me above all. I sought with Mauricet some way of trying this last possibility. I finally recalled a countrywoman, Mother Riviou, living near Lonjumeau, with whom Madeleine could find, perhaps, without much expense, the life and the care which she needed. I wrote her and received the response which we desired.

It remained to make the invalid herself consent. For this it was necessary for Mauricet to support my prayers with all his eloquence. The dear woman regarded her sojourn in the country as an exile; she wished to think about it. At last, however, she yielded, and I went myself to take her.

Mother Riviou received us as old acquaintances. Never a braver woman had eaten the bread of the good God. She comprehended

at once the character of her new boarder and promised me to make her contented.

"We pass so much of our life in the fields," she said to me, "that the house shall belong to your mother; she will be able to guide herself as one leads his donkey by bridle and halter. We have too much to do to quarrel with any one's fancies; here each one loves his repose; what one does disturbs no one else. In a month I shall have a young girl who will keep the good woman company and aid her in the housekeeping. She is a true shepherd's dog, who shall obey your mother's every motion and look; so that she cannot help being pleased among us if the evil one doesn't interfere." I left, completely re-assured.

However, the absence of my mother changed every thing for me. Now I was alone, obliged to eat at the wine-seller's and to lodge with others. Not having the habits of the other journeymen, I hardly knew what to do with my Sundays and evenings. Mauricet noticed that I appeared sad.

"Take care," he said to me; "it is possible to get good out of all situations. I have been through the experience, my boy, and I know

what it is to camp in this way. At the beginning one is perplexed, then wearied. One would like better to lie on straw than between sheets with every body; but it is an apprenticeship. Look out that you do not fall into evil, abandoned to yourself and obliged to look out for your own interests. Living always with a mother, one is never weaned. When we are little and the good God gives them to us he does us a favor; but when we are become men and are separated from them for a time he also renders us a service. If Madeleine had not gone you would never have known how to sew on your suspender buttons."

I felt the truth of what he said; but I found this new apprenticeship quite as hard as that to which I had submitted for a trade. I began to comprehend that it was more difficult to be a man than to become a workman.

The chamber where I lodged had a dozen beds, occupied by the journeymen belonging to the different building trades, such as masons, carpenters, painters, and locksmiths. Among them was a native of Auvergne, already upon the down-hill side of life, whom they called

Marcotte, and who had formerly worked in our stone-yard. He was a quiet man, always at work without being a great workman, and he spoke only when he was obliged to. Marcotte lived on nuts and radishes, according to the season, and sent all his wages to the country to buy land. He already owned ten acres, and waited until he could make them twelve to retire upon his domain. Then he would build himself a house, keep two cows and a horse, and be a farmer.

This project, followed from the age of twelve years, was almost accomplished; a few months more and he would reach his goal. We sometimes joked the old man, whom they called "the proprietor," but mockeries glided from him like rain from a roof. Wrapped up in his idea, every thing else was for him only noise. It was in seeing him that I reflected for the first time upon the strength that lay in an active, resolute will. Before this example I had not known what the perseverance of the most feeble can accomplish against the strongest obstacle.

The neighbor of old man Marcotte, in the chamber, had not learned this lesson. He was a

journeyman locksmith, young and skillful, but who only worked when he wished, amused himself at will, and never remained in a shop longer than one month, "for fear of being taken for moss," as he said. Every thing which inconvenienced him he treated as a superstition. If one spoke of regularity in work, superstition! of honesty toward others, superstition! of kindness toward comrades, superstition! of duty to his relations, superstition! Faroumont declared loudly that each one lived for himself and ought to regard other men as excellent game to fry when one can catch it. They laughed at his ideas, but there were rumors on his account which pointed to the police court, and the good workmen held themselves aloof from him.

For my part I avoided him as much as possible, less by reason than repugnance. From the first day he had called me "the rose girl" in sneering at some scruples which I had let him see; and I had responded to the nickname by calling him "the convict," in allusion to the galleys, where his principles, it seemed to me, would lead him. The two names were accepted by the lodgers. Although Farou-

mont had appeared to take the thing in a laughing way he cherished ill-will toward me and endeavored many times to seek a quarrel, knowing well that I was not strong enough to resist him; but I conducted myself with such prudence as to thwart his intentions. Mauricet, witnessing one of his attempts, encouraged me to persist.

"Distrust him as you would the devil," he said to me, seriously. "You know that I am not a child, and that I have coped with some solid fellows, but I should better like a sickness of six months than to have a quarrel with this one."

I thought the same. The intelligence and the wickedness of Faroumont rendered his strength truly formidable; for one of the calamities of our condition—of us workers at the trades—is the blind respect which we have for brute force. By a sort of point of honor the workman is reduced to personal means of defense; he draws glory from not seeking it outside, so that he who can triumph over each one, individually, finds himself in the way of tyrannizing over every body. If the race of duelists with swords has disappeared in the

other classes that of duelists with fists continues as numerous as ever among us. How often have I seen these ferocious scamps who have crippled brave workmen, or even made widows, and whose villainy gave them a certain consideration! No one dared show his scorn for fear of increasing the list of the victims. Every body said, "We must take care; he is a wicked rascal!" And they held him in regard. Yet what could he have done against all? Since all are in accord in judging him, how comes it about that they do not agree to execute judgment? Would it then be so difficult for the honest workmen to unite against these furious beasts to chase them from their places? But we still have in one respect the idea of savages; like them we take the spirit of brutality and of battle for courage, and we make of that a virtue which redeems all its vices!

The companionship of the lodging-house had made me as intimate with old man Marcotte as the difference in age and tastes would permit. He confided to me his project of soon retiring to the country; he only waited the opportunity for completing the purchase of his little farm.

Two or three days after this confidence he entered later than his custom; a part of our companions were already in bed. I had sat up to write to Lonjumeau, and I was on the point of putting out my candle, when I heard the old man climbing the stairs and singing. He opened the door with a noisy assurance which astonished me. Contrary to all his habits, he talked in a loud voice, his eyes glistened and his hat had a swaggering tip over one ear. At the first look I comprehended that "the proprietor" had departed from his habitual sobriety. The wine rendered him talkative, and he seated himself upon the edge of his bed to relate to me the story of the evening. He had just left the carrier who executed the commissions from the country. He had informed him that the piece of land, long time coveted to complete his farm, was finally for sale; the notary only waited for his money.

"Have you the sum?" I asked.

"As you say, my boy," replied Marcotte, lowering his voice and with a mysterious laugh; "pounds and fractions, all is ready."

He looked around him to assure himself that every body slept; then, burying his arm up to

the shoulder in his mattress, he drew forth a bag which he showed me with a proud expression.

"See, here it is," he said to me. "There is here a fine bit of land and wherewithal to build a dog-kennel."

He had untwisted the cord which bound the cloth bag and plunged his hand within to touch the pieces; but at the noise of the chinking he trembled, glanced around, made a sign to me to say nothing, and, closing the sack, hid it under his bolster. He was soon in bed and asleep.

I undressed to do the same; but at the moment of extinguishing the candle I turned toward the bed of Faroumont; the journeyman locksmith had his eyes wide open. He closed them quickly under my look. I thought no more about it and went to bed.

I cannot say what troubled my sleep in the midst of the night; I awoke with a start. The moon shone through the curtainless windows and threw a very clear light from our side. I found myself facing the bed of "the convict;" it was empty! I raised myself upon my shoulder to see better. Doubt

was impossible; Faroumont had got up! At the same moment I heard the creaking of a floor-board at my right; I turned my head. A shadow suddenly dropped and had the appearance of hiding itself under the bed of Father Marcotte. I rubbed my eyes to assure myself that I was not dreaming, and I looked again. Nothing could be seen; all had become silent. I lay down, keeping my eyes half open. A quarter of an hour passed and my eyelids began to close for good, when a new creaking of the boards made me open them. I only had time to see Faroumont get into bed and draw the clothes over him. No suspicions came to me at the moment, and I went to sleep.

Exclamations, mixed with tears and groans, rudely interrupted my sleep. I jumped up with a bound; the day began to break, and I perceived the Auvergnat tearing his hair before his tumbled bed. All the chamber companions were sitting up in bed.

"What is the matter?" demanded many voices.

"Some one has stolen his money!" others responded.

"Yes, stolen this night!" repeated Marcotte, with a despair which rendered him foolish; "yesterday it was there. I touched it. I had it under my head when I went to sleep. The robber who took it is here!"

A sudden recollection enlightened me. I turned toward "the convict;" he was the only one who had the appearance of sleeping in the midst of all this tumult. I quickly considered my position. I was probably the only one who had knowledge of the theft. If I kept silence the Auvergnat would lose the sum laboriously saved and which would realize the hopes pursued during forty years. If I spoke, on the contrary, I could force "the convict" to a restitution, but I would expose myself to his vengeance! In spite of the danger of the choice my deliberation was short. I extended my hand toward the Auvergnat and drew him toward me.

"Calm yourself, Father Marcotte," I cried; "your money is not lost."

"What is that you say?" cried the old workman, whose face had a frenzied look. "You know where the bag is! Wretch, is it you who have taken it?"

"Come, you are a fool!" I angrily said to him.

"Where is it, then? where is it?" he began to cry, looking at me.

I turned toward Faroumont.

"See here, 'Convict,' the laugh has gone far enough; your joke will give 'the proprietor' the jaundice. Give him back his money, quickly."

Although he had his eyes shut his face changed color, which proved to me that he had heard. Marcotte threw himself upon him, like a dog who shakes his prey, to reclaim his coins. Faroumont played well enough the man who awakes, and asked what they wanted; but the cries of the Auvergnat made him understand too quickly to give him time to prepare any evasion. I insisted with resolution, representing the taking of the bag as a bad turn played upon Father Marcotte with the intention of disturbing him. "The convict" was obliged to give back the money, repeating that he had wished to play a trick; yet he read upon all faces without trouble that they knew how to take him. Every one hastily dressed and left without speaking. He alone affected not to

hurry, and made his toilet whistling. But when I passed before his bed he cast at me a look of malignant rage which made me tremble from head to foot. Henceforth, I was sure of having a deadly enemy.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ENEMY STRIKES.

ONE day Mauricet said to me, "I have near Berny a debtor who failed last year, but who has come to the surface again. I must go and assure myself of the phenomenon and fish out, if possible, my hundred crowns. Take the wagon with me Saturday evening. You can go as far as Lonjumeau to see Madeleine, and I will rejoin you the next day at the Bois Riant."

The thing was agreed. I had only visited my mother twice since her departure, and the last time I had found her almost completely blind, otherwise better than ever and in fine spirits. But this was three months ago, and work had since always kept me at the stone-yard.

When I reached Lonjumeau the day was drawing to its close. I took the road which led to the house of Mother Riviou; but they had cut the trees, built inclosures, and I no

more recognized the way. After having gone astray in two or three foot-paths I looked around me for some one who could set me in the right direction. The nearest house was quite distant, and I did not notice at first that, for the moment, the fields were deserted. Suddenly I heard some one singing. I recognized the refrain of an old roundel which in my childhood I had often heard my mother sing. I stopped, surprised and pleased. It was the first time I had heard this air for fifteen years. It seemed to me that I had become a child again and that I heard Madeleine restored to youth. In fact, although the voice was strong and fresh, it recalled that of my mother. There was the same manner of throwing the sounds to the wind with a gentleness tinged a little with sadness, as I have since heard the shepherdesses of Burgundy and Champagne. I approached the singer, who was busy taking down white linen from a clothes-line. I found a girl with pleasing countenance who looked me full in the face when I asked the road to the Bois Riant, and who then began laughing.

"I will wager that you are Madeleine's son," she said to me.

I looked at her in my turn, laughing.

"And I will wager that you are the young girl that Mother Riviou expected," I responded.

"They call you Peter Henry?"

"And you Genevieve?"

"Well, then, here is an unexpected meeting."

"As if we recognized each other without ever having seen one another!"

We broke again into laughter, and the explanations began.

I learned that my mother had completely lost her sight, but was unwilling to admit it. For the rest Genevieve declared to me that she was braver than all the young people in the house and always sang like a bird.

"Did she teach you the refrain which you have just sung?" I asked.

"Ah, you have heard me?" she replied. "Yes, yes; the good Madeleine taught me all her old songs. She said that they would help me to lull my children or those of others."

While talking she hastened to gather her linen. I aided her in making a bundle, which I took upon my shoulder.

"Well, then, so I have a servant!" she said, gayly.

And as I told her that it was right for the son to repay that which she did for the mother she commenced to speak to me of Madeleine with so much friendship that when we reached the Bois Riant I had already declared my obligation to her from the bottom of my heart.

Mother, who was at the door, recognized my voice, and did not omit to say that she had seen me. Since the darkness of night had shut her in all her pride lay in not appearing blind. Genevieve aided her without having the appearance of it. She had surrounded the house, outside and in, with a thick cord which formed a leading-string and directed the blind one. A knot served to inform her when she approached a door, a piece of furniture, or a step. A rattle, shaken by the wind, indicated to her the location of the well. Recognizing signs had likewise been placed in the garden-paths. Thanks to Genevieve, in short, Bois Riant was a veritable topographical chart which one could read by feeling the way. The dear woman was always moving about, found every thing because they had put every thing under her hand, and boasted of it each time as if it were a proof of her clear sight. Every body in the

house respected her error and felt an innocent pleasure in keeping up the deception. She was like a spoiled child there who made all smile and appeared welcome.

Mauricet, who had rejoined me according to his promise, understood immediately the position which Madeleine held by the kindness of her hostess.

"You have not always had your due in comfort and happiness," he said to her, "but it seems to me that now the arrears are being made up to you."

"The country is certainly agreeable," replied the good woman, who did not like to avow too loudly her contentment.

"Yes," replied Mauricet; "but these are nice people who make the country so pleasant, and you have fallen here upon a colony of Christians of a kind not too common."

"I do not complain," observed Madeleine.

"And you are right," continued the master-mason. "These good hearts have made up to you that which chance has taken away. That is why I advise you to thank the ailment which has brought you so many servants and friends. If you still had your eyes—"

"What! what! my eyes!" impatiently interrupted the old mother. "Do you imagine, by chance, that I am blind?"

"It is true—you are cured," replied Mauricet, smiling.

"And the proof is that I see you," continued Madeleine, who heard the noise of the forks. "You are at table with Peter Henry. Ah, ah! just now you have asked for bread, and you have cut it. Ah, ah, ah! there is nothing which escapes me, and there are still more than one with the eyes of fifteen years who could not do that which I do here."

Mother Riviou came to the support of what Madeleine said by reporting all that she left to her care in the house. The excellent woman had comprehended that for the infirm person who still retains courage the hardest trial is the feeling of uselessness. Genevieve outdid her mistress. When we were on the way back Mauricet remarked to me this good understanding of all the family to make Madeleine contented.

"They say, though, that the world is wicked," he added, with warmth; "that the good people have become, like white blackbirds,

impossible to find; but those who say so, you see, do not seek for them, and, more often, do not care to. For my part, I have never passed a day without receiving from some one a good word or a good service. Unhappily, there are people who only make account of the evil done them and who receive the good as a delayed payment. It is almost always because one is too content with himself that he is discontented with every body else."

Some months passed without any thing special happening. I made many journeys to the Bois Riant, and Genevieve often brought me news of the old mother. The excellent girl came to Paris as often as she could to see her nephew Robert, placed by her in apprenticeship. Robert was then seventeen years old, and worked in a shop where imitation jewelry was made, but with the airs of the son of a well-to-do family. His master, whom I went to see one day on behalf of Genevieve, declared to me that he would never become more than a bungler who makes threepenny trash.

"He wishes to be a perfumed fop," he said to me; "but he has not the heart nor the hands to work."

In truth, Mr. Robert resembled rather a senator's son than a jeweler's apprentice. Genevieve gave him her last sou, and when they blamed her she always told how her brother had recommended the child to her on his death-bed, how she had promised to be every thing to him, and then, when the great tears came into her eyes and rolled down her cheeks, no one had the heart to say any thing more. Mr. Robert knew her weakness and did not fail to abuse it. He had a pretty little pink face, the white hands and soft voice of a young girl. One would have said that he was a lamb to be led with a ribbon; but in reality nothing could turn him against his will, and a mad dog had been more easy to lead. I afterward came to know this to my great damage. For the time our intercourse was limited to short conversations. It appeared to me that the little nephew was not enchanted with the acquaintance of his aunt. Indeed, our friendships and our occupations were far removed from each other. Mr. Robert sang romantic songs, made the rounds of the restaurants, and frequented the balls at night.

As for me, I lived by myself more than ever.

The affair with Faroumont had intensified my distaste for the lodging-house, and I had rented a little room under the roofs. A chair, a trunk, a cot-bed formed all my movables; but at least I was alone. The space comprised between the four walls belonged only to me. They came not, as in the lodging-house, to breathe my air, trouble my quiet, interrupt my song or my sleep. I was master of that which surrounded me, and that is the only means of being master of one's self. This, at first, appeared to me so good that I only thought of enjoying it. I was like a shivering man who, once buried in the bedclothes, is loath to leave them. I doted upon my new liberty, and I no more quitted my mansard after work-hours. Mauricet complained two or three times of seeing me no more.

"You are getting in the habit of living on the sly," he said to me. "In the world, as in the army, you see, it is good to be elbowed a little by your neighbor. You are too young to turn snail and withdraw yourself into a shell. Come and see your friends. It is healthy for the heart to take the air."

I had responded nothing; only I continued

to cling to my ways. I might have been able to utilize this kind of retreat by resuming my interrupted studies; but no one urged me, and I did not feel the taste for it. I can hardly say what passed within me. I was like one benumbed in my supineness. I rested entire hours without thinking precisely of any thing, but going from one thing to another like a man who strolls without aim. I had need of a shaking to draw me out from this waking sleep. The malice of Faroumont prepared one for me upon which I had not counted.

We had not seen each other for many months, when I encountered him at a building we were completing in the Rue du Cherche Midi. He came to place the great irons of the timber-work. In recognizing me he had interrupted his work with a wicked laugh.

"Well, then, cursed dog, so you are botching here!" he demanded, with his usual insolence.

I responded briefly in mounting a window, cut through the wall as an after-thought, and which I came to finish.

"Ah, the scaffold is for you!" he said, and his glance turned toward the plank which hung

from the height of the gable. I went below and left my vest and lunch-basket; then I climbed toward the new window. The scaffold was strongly suspended by two ropes that I had myself attached to the timbering; but scarcely had I placed my feet upon it than the evil face of "the convict" showed itself above between the joists; at the same instant a cord was unknotted, the plank swung, and I was thrown from a height of forty feet upon the rubbish below.

I cannot say how long a time I remained senseless; the pain brought me to consciousness at the moment they wished to move me. It seemed to me that the earth on which I was extended made a part of myself, and that they could not take me away from it without tearing me. Some comrades went to look for a doctor and a stretcher, while the others, among whom was Faroumont, continued to surround me. I suffered cruelly, but it seemed to me that my wounds were not mortal.

The doctor, who arrived soon after, said nothing. He gave me some preliminary attentions and had me put upon the stretcher and carried to the hospital.

I recall only confusedly what passed for some days. My first distinct recollection was the visit of Mauricet. He informed me that I had lain there a week; that they had despaired of my life, and that now the head doctor would answer for it. The brave man was rejoiced at the news, and yet a little angry at me. When he had asked the cause of the accident they had told him of a cord badly tied, and he reproached me energetically for my negligence. I justified myself without trouble by relating to him what had passed. He recoiled and smote his hands together.

"Here is the key to the charade!" he exclaimed. "Name the club and I would not doubt! Since 'the convict' was there one can wager that the devil would be mixed in it. Have you already spoken of it to any one?"

"To no one."

"And there was no witness?"

"We were alone at the top of the building."

"Then hush! Not a word!" he said, after a moment's reflection. "Accusing an enemy without proof will not rid you of him, but will envenom him. If you say nothing 'the convict' will, perhaps, consider your account squared

and trouble you no more, while in talking about it you will oblige him to begin again. What has happened to you has happened to many others in our condition. I myself have made a false step of two stories by the malice of a companion who owed me forty crowns of which he hoped thus to acquit himself. There were only we two who knew the thing; I whispered not a word. I let time do justice to the rascal, and six months after two of his fellows clubbed him like a dog to steal thirty sous from him."

I comprehended the prudence of Mauricet's advice, and yet I submitted myself to it only with repugnance.

My fall kept me more than two months at the hospital. I was desperate sometimes, the cure was so slow; but I had a neighbor who gave me courage.

He was a poor old man, bent with suffering, and who called himself, I believe, Pariset. They only called him here by the number of his bed, which was twelve. This bed had already received him thrice for three long sicknesses, and was thus become in some sort his property. "Mr. No. Twelve" was known by

the doctor-in-chief, the students, and the attendants. Never a gentler creature walked beneath the heaven. When I say walked it was so no more, alas! for the brave man that was only a recollection! For nearly two years he had lost almost completely the use of his limbs. Still, in the meantime he lived by copying law-papers. He was not much disconcerted, he said, and he had continued to draw up his lists on the stamped paper. A little later the paralysis attacked the right arm; he then practiced writing with his left hand; but the evil grew; it was necessary to carry him to the hospital, where he had had the happiness of finding his own bed again free; and this had almost consoled him.

"Bad luck is only for a time," he said on this occasion; "every day has a to-morrow."

Old man No. Twelve had taken possession of his bed with emotion. The hospital, where staying seems so hard to some people, was for him a house of pleasure. He found there every thing to his liking. His admiration for the least comforts proved what privations he had until then supported. He went into ecstasies over the cleanness of the linen, over the

whiteness of the bread and the richness of the soups; and I was no more astonished when I was told that for twenty years he had lived upon army-bread, herb soup, and white cheese. He could not enough praise the munificence of the nation which had opened such retreats for the sick poor. Besides, his gratitude did not stop there. It embraced all. To hear him one would suppose that God had for him particular favor; men showed themselves full of kindness, and things always turned to his advantage. As the doctor said, No. Twelve had "the fatuity of happiness;" but this fatuity only gave us esteem for the brave man and encouragement for one's self.

I believe I see him yet, sitting up in bed with his little night-cap of black silk, his spectacles, and the old volume of verse which he ceased not to read. His bed received in the morning the first rays of the sun, and he never saw them without rejoicing and thanking God. To see his gratitude one would have said that the sun arose especially for him. He kept regularly informed of the progress of my recovery, and always found something to say to give me patience. Of that he was himself a living exam-

ple which said more than words. When I saw this poor body without movement, those distorted limbs, and above that smiling face, I had neither the courage to be impatient nor to complain.

"It is a bad moment to pass," he said at each crisis; "the solace will soon come; every day has a to-morrow."

This was the word of Father No. Twelve, and he returned to it ceaselessly. Mauricet, who in coming to see me came to know him, never passed before his bed without saluting him.

"He is a saint," he said to me; "but he gains paradise not alone for himself, he makes others gain it too. Such men ought to be placed on the top of a column, to be seen by every body. When one looks at them it makes him ashamed of being happy, and that gives one the wish to merit it."

Toward the end of my stay at the hospital the strength of Father No. Twelve diminished rapidly. He lost at first all movement, then his tongue itself became confused. There were only left the eyes, which still smiled at us. One morning, however, it appeared to me

that his eyes were dimmer. I got up and approached to ask him if he wished to drink; he made a movement of the eyelids which thanked me, and at this moment the first ray of the rising sun gleamed upon his bed. Then his eyes brightened, like a light which sparkles before going out; he had the appearance of saluting this last gift of the good God. Then I saw his head fall back on one side; his brave heart had ceased to beat, and there were no more to-days for him; he had begun the eternal to-morrow.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GREAT CONTRACTOR.

ON leaving the hospital I resumed my work, but slowly; I had no longer as much strength as formerly, nor, above all, so much ardor. This long repose seemed to have mixed water with my blood. I was, besides, so well cured of my ambition by the example of the old copyist that I tranquilly awaited the bread of each day without troubling myself whether it should be black or white. Mauricet became impatient at my apathy.

"It isn't necessary to exaggerate things," he said; "once the soup is made good children eat it as it is; but while it is making they endeavor to enrich it. After all, we are no more at nurse! it is not for Providence to cook our food for us; each one ought to lend a hand. The wise thing for a young fellow who has his four members is not to live like a paralytic, but by serving himself the best he can."

I did not argue with him; my hands merely

continued to work, my heart was in it no more. I would not have been able myself to say why. Nothing in this state displeased me, neither pleased me. My courage simply slept. An opportunity was necessary to awaken it.

I went one day with Mauricet to the dwelling of one of the greatest contractors in Paris for some instruction asked by the master-mason, and which, under his dictation, I had put in writing. The contractor was not in his office; so they made us go through many rooms to join him in the garden. There were everywhere carpets of many colors, furniture with gilded feet, tapestry of silk and velvet curtains. Never had I seen any thing like it; my eyes opened widely, and I walked upon my toe-tips for fear of crushing the flowers of the carpet. Mauricet glanced at me sideways.

"Well, then, how do you find the house?" he asked, with a sly air. "Does it appear to you handsome and substantial enough?"

I replied that the house had the appearance of that of a prince.

"Prince of the trowel and the square," responded my companion. "He has three other

houses in Paris, without speaking of a country house."

I said nothing at the moment; all this opulence stirred something unpleasant within me. In seeing so much velvet and silk I looked at myself, I know not why, and I was ashamed to be so badly dressed. But in my shame there was discontent; I felt disposed to hate the master of all these riches for having made me remark my poverty. Mauricet, who suspected nothing, continued to detail the beauties of the dwelling. I listened with impatience; my heart beat, the blood mounted to my face, my eyes could not stop looking, and the more I saw the more I became exasperated. My ambition, which had slept for some time, awakened, but through envy!

We had halted in the best salon while the domestic sought his master. Mauricet all at once pointed out to me an ugly little portrait hung in the midst of large pictures richly framed. It represented a workman in his vest, holding in one hand his pipe and in the other a compass.

"Behold the gentleman," the mason said to me.

"Has he been a workman, then?" I asked.

"Like you and me," replied Mauricet; "and you see that he is not ashamed of it."

I looked at the frame of black wood, then at the rich furniture, as if my mind sought the transition from one to the other.

"Ah, this troubles your reason," resumed the mason, laughing; "you seek the ladder which has been able to land him here from the height of his scaffold. But every body doesn't know how to serve himself, you see; in wishing to take it more than one has lacked the advantages; it is necessary to have wrists and cleverness."

I observed that above all it was necessary to have the chance, that all were happy or unhappy in the world, and that the individual counted for nothing in achieving success. "For example, Father Mauricet," I sharply added, "why have you not a hotel as well as he who dwells here? Are you less meritorious or less brave? If he has succeeded better than you is it not all a stupid story of chance?"

Mauricet fastened his eye upon me.

"You say this for me, but it is of yourself that you think, sonny," he slyly replied.

"It is all the same," I said, a little vexed at having my thought divined. "I don't pass for a bad workman; if it only sufficed to do one's duty I should also ride in a carriage."

"And is it a manner of going about which would become you?" added my companion, ironically.

"Why not? Every body likes better to save his legs than those of horses; but have no fear that I shall reach that; it is down here, you see, as formerly with the noble families, all for the oldest, nothing for the younger ones, and we are the younger ones, we others."

"It is true, however," murmured the master-journeyman, who became thoughtful.

"And there is nothing to say," I continued. "Since it is agreed to it is just! It is not necessary to disturb the world! Only, you see, it makes my blood boil when I look at the share of each one. Whence comes it that this man here lodges in a palace whilst others perch in pigeon-houses? Why is it that these carpets, these silks, these velvets, belong to him rather than to us?"

"Because I have earned them," some one interrupted, bluntly.

I started; the contractor was behind us in broidered slippers and dressing-gown! He was a little gray man, but with a strong figure and a commanding voice.

"Ah! it appears that you are a reasoner," he continued, looking at me through half-shut eyes. "You are jealous of me. You ask by what right my house belongs to me rather than to you. Well, then, you shall know. Come!"

He had made a movement toward an interior door. I hesitated to follow him. He turned toward me.

"Are you afraid?" he demanded, in a tone which made me red to the eyes.

"Let the gentleman show me the way," I replied, almost impudently.

He conducted us into an office, in the midst of which stood a long table covered with ink-cups, brushes, rulers, and compasses. Upon the walls hung colored plans representing all the details of a building. Here and there upon stands might be seen little models of staircases, or timber-work, magnetic compasses, graphometers, with other instruments, the use of which I was ignorant. An immense case with labeled compartments occupied the end of the room,

and upon a bureau were heaped memoranda and estimates. The contractor stopped before the large table and showed me a color-cup.

"Here is a plan to modify," he said. "They wish to narrow the building by three meters, but without diminishing the number of chambers, and it is necessary to find a place for the staircase. Sit down and make me a sketch of the thing."

I looked at him with surprise, and observed that I did not know how to design.

"Then examine for me this estimate," he resumed, taking a bundle of papers from his bureau; "there are three hundred and twelve articles to discuss."

I responded that I was not well enough informed in such work to discuss prices or to verify measurements

"You at least can tell me," continued the contractor, "what are the formalities to fulfill for the three houses which I am going to build; you know the rules of building inspection, the obligations and rights with regard to neighbors?"

I quickly interrupted him, saying that I was not a lawyer.

"And you are neither a banker," resumed the gentleman; "you are ignorant, without doubt, in what language it is necessary to draw up the terms of payment, what is the average time needful to sell in, what interest one ought to draw from his capital not to become bankrupt. As you are not a trader you would be very much embarrassed in naming the sources of the best materials, of choosing the best time for buying them, the most economical means of transporting them. As you are not a mechanic it is useless for me to inquire if the crane, of which you see the model there, yields its force with the highest economy. As you are not a mathematician you would vainly attempt to judge this new system of bridge-building which I am to apply on the lower Seine. Finally, as you know nothing except what a thousand other journeymen know you are only good as they are, to handle the trowel and the hammer!"

I was completely disconcerted, and I twirled my hat without responding.

"Do you understand now why I dwell in a great house while you live in an attic?" resumed the contractor, raising his voice. "It is because

I have taken the trouble; it is because I have informed myself of all that which you have neglected to know; it is because of my hard study and strong will that I have become a general while you remain among the conscripts! By what right, then, do you demand the same advantages as your superiors? Ought society not to recompense each one according to the services he renders? If you wish it to treat you like me do what I have done; scrimp your bread to buy books; pass the day working and the night studying; watch every-where for instruction as the merchant watches for a profit, and when you shall show that nothing discourages you, when you know things and men, then, if you remain in your attic, come and complain and I will listen to you."

The contractor spoke with much animation, and finished by being a little angry. Still, I answered nothing; his reasons had left me speechless. Mauricet, who saw my embarrassment, attempted some words to justify me, and then came to the subject of our visit. The gentleman examined my note, asked some explanations, then took leave of us. But at the moment I was passing the door he recalled me.

"Remember what I have told you, comrade," he resumed, with familiar good-nature, "and instead of having envy try to have a little honest ambition. Do not lose your time fuming against those who are higher up; work, rather, to spin a cord to join them. If I can ever aid you you have only to say the word and I will lend you the first bit of hemp!"

I thanked him very briefly and hastened to leave. When we were in the street Mauricet broke into laughter.

"Well, well! Here is a humiliation for a wise man like you!" he exclaimed. "Wasn't he proud of having nonplused you?"

And as he saw that I made a movement of impatience, "Come now, are you going to get angry over such a farce?" he added in a friendly way, "The gentleman has pleaded his cause; it is just, too; but if I do not keep a carriage I know one when I see it. A millionaire, you see, is made neither with the compass nor with the drawing-pen."

"And with what, then?" I asked.

"With money!"

I was this time of the opinion of the master-workman; but in spite of my vexation the

contractor's lesson had struck home. When I regained my coolness I came to think that reason was altogether on his side. This episode had given my mind a wholesome shake. I resumed my former activity. Convinced of the necessity of instruction, I recovered my taste for study. The difficulty was to procure the means. Although it was a little painful to return to the contractor, whose recollection of me might be unpleasant, I decided to recall to him his proposition to aid me. He received me well, informed himself of what I knew, and sent me to a surveyor whom he employed. He admitted me gratuitously into an evening class to which some young people came to be instructed in geometry and drawing.

I made myself remarked at first only for stupidity and awkwardness. It was always necessary to explain to me twice what the others comprehended at the first statement; my hand, used to lifting stone, pierced the paper or crushed the crayons. I was very far behind the last scholar! Yet, little by little, by the force of perseverance the distance decreased and I slowly reached the average level.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MOTHER'S LAST GIFT.

MY life tranquilly passed between work at the stone-yard and that of the class. From time to time I went to see my mother at Lonjumeau, and Genevieve brought me news of her. For some months the strength of the blind woman had sensibly decreased; she seldom left her easy-chair, and her mind was not clear. Mauricet was struck by it as well as myself.

"The distaff is tangled," he said to me, with his customary curtness; "beware the end of the skein!"

I repulsed this sinister prediction with a sort of anger.

"What! what!" resumed the master-workman, "do you think the thing is more a smiling matter to me than to you? But the future is like men; it is always necessary to look it in the face. Do you not see that there is no benefit in closing the eyes so as not to see the evil

which must come? It is beautiful to love one another, my poor child, but one day or another we must part; so much the better for those who leave first."

"And why think in advance of these cruel separations?" I asked.

"Why?" repeated Mauricet. "So as not to be taken by surprise, my little one; to strengthen the heart and to conduct one's self like a man when the moment comes! In life, you see, the question is not to play at hide-and-seek with truth; brave people lie neither to others nor to themselves. Besides," he added, with feeling, "think of death; it is always wholesome! Whether one goes or sees another go, one wishes to leave a good memory with those who go or with those who remain, and he becomes better. Now that you are forewarned I think you will occupy yourself more with Madeleine, and that you will have a very pleasant evening after so wretched a day."

Mauricet spoke truly; his warning had resulted in making me return oftener to the farm and recalling to me more constantly my duty. At each visit I carried to my mother what I knew would please her taste, and she thanked

me in embracing me as she had never done before. Perhaps, also, she felt her life ebbing, and she clung with the more affection to those whom she was so soon to leave.

"You wish to make me thank the good God for being old!" she said to me at every new care I took of her.

Then she began to talk of her youth, of the first years of her married life, of my childhood. She recalled all that I had done, all that I had said from the day of my birth; it was for her the history of the world. Genevieve listened as attentively as if she had recounted the life of Napoleon. Always watchful, always singing, she brought with her an atmosphere of cheerfulness. Her blind mistress scolded her, but in a tone which seemed to say that it was only to occupy myself with you, and when we were alone she would repeat, "She is the youngest daughter of the good God!" Genevieve, who heard her sometimes, never appeared to do so, in order to leave the good woman the pleasure of grumbling. However, at my last visit she seemed troubled.

"Mother Madeleine gets no better," she said to me at the moment of my departure.

"Alas! my God, I have seen it!" I replied; "but she pretends not to suffer, and refuses to see a doctor."

"Perhaps she is right," said the young girl; "that would only sadden her."

We exchanged a sigh, and I left with a pang at my heart.

The next day I was at a new building upon the highest scaffolding, when I heard myself called. I looked down and my heart stopped beating; it was Genevieve.

"How does mother do?" I cried to her.

"Badly," she responded, in an altered voice.

In an instant I had descended.

"She wishes to see you," continued Genevieve, quickly; "come immediately; the doctor said that time pressed."

We left at once. Never had the road appeared so long. It seemed to me that the horses traveled slower, that the driver stopped oftener. I would have liked to know the exact state of the old mother, and I dared not question Genevieve. We at last arrived at Lonjumeau. I took the way to the farm, almost running. Mother Riviou was not in the fields according to her habit; I saw her at the door

with an air of waiting. This appeared to me a bad sign. She cried out on seeing me. I looked at her in a way she comprehended, for she eagerly said to me, "Come in; she asks for you."

I found mother very low; yet she recognized me and extended both hands. I cannot say what passed within me then; but when I saw her thus, with leaden-colored features, glassy eyes, and lips agitated by the chill of death, the recollection of all that she had done for me suddenly traversed my mind. The idea that I was going to lose her without having requited so much kindness struck me like a knife. I uttered a cry and threw myself in her arms.

"Come, Peter, don't grieve," she said to me, very low; "I die content, since I have seen you."

I felt that it was necessary to master my pain, and I seated myself near the bed and sought to persuade her there was hope; but she would not listen to me.

"Lose no time deceiving yourself," she said to me, in a voice which grew more feeble; "I desire to tell you my last wishes; call Genevieve."

The young girl approached; the dying woman gave her the keys to her closet and asked for many things which she designated —a watch which had belonged to my father, her wedding ear-rings, a little silver goblet, and some jewelry. She had them placed upon the bed, called one after the other of the people of the house, and gave something to each one. Mother Riviou had the silver goblet; she gave me the watch, and wished Genevieve to take the ear-rings. She then chose the sheet in which they should lay her out, told how she wished to be buried, and asked that there should be upon her tomb a stone cut by myself.

We listened, keeping back our tears with great trouble, and promised all that she asked. Then the pastor came. My heart was too full; I went out to weep behind the house.

I believe that I remained there a long time, for when I re-entered it was night. The pastor had gone. I heard Genevieve respond to my mother. At the first word I comprehended that the question concerned me. The dying mother, disturbed about leaving her son alone in the world, had communicated to the young

girl a wish which she had the appearance of softly resisting.

"Peter Henry is too wise and good-hearted not to know what he wishes to do," she said, in a voice a little troubled.

"But, then, why do you not wish to marry him?" demanded the mother.

"I have not said that, Mother Madeleine," responded Genevieve.

"Let me speak to him, then."

"No," she quickly continued; "to-day he can refuse you nothing, and later he may repent. It is not for you to decide; neither for me, good mother; he ought to choose according to his own taste and will. Whatever he does you know well that I shall always be ready to serve him."

"Alas!" murmured my mother, plaintively, "I waited for yet this joy upon earth."

"And you shall have it if it only depends upon me," I cried, in approaching the bed. "No one can fear that I shall repent, for your choice is my choice."

There, I have espoused Genevieve, and I can say that this has been the last gift from her who brought me into the world.

She died the next day when the clock struck twelve, holding my hand and that of Genevieve. Let God recompense her for what she has suffered, and make up to her that which I have not been able to render! A mother is too much a creditor for her children ever to pay her here below.

CHAPTER IX.

SUDDEN MISFORTUNE.

MY marriage to Genevieve put an end to my studies. Until then I had worked to become capable; once at the head of a family I should occupy myself drawing some return from my capacities.

For those who live by work this setting up of a home is a great joy and a great encouragement. The idea that one tires himself no more for himself alone fills the heart with courage; one begins to think of the to-morrow when company may arrive; in feeling that henceforth one is two he knots more tightly the cords of his scaffolding, and he adds a stanchion the more for safety. Since my wedding-day I have had many cares and black humors; more than one time, under the heavy charge of a family, I have felt the suspenders pulling on my shoulders; but when I have returned to my better self I have always found that marriage is a holy and brave thing, the

best help against the bad strokes of fate, and altogether the true strength of men of good-will.

Therefore it is wise to know that your choice is well placed. Before calling thus into your life another yourself, who will become your living shadow, it is good to look at her from the head as well as from the heart to assure one's self that he shall have near him in the house a second conscience and not a tempter. If we hesitate to take an associate in business for fear that he may take one's credit and money, how much more for a partner of existence, who can take from one his repose and honor? To tell the truth, the women who thus turn against one are very few; almost all bring into the home at least as much of uprightness, good conduct, and devotion as the husband. They may have more little faults, but they have fewer vices. It is rare to find them hardened in evil; yet if this comes about it is oftener than not by our fault.

Those who live above us in the ease which comes of inheritance, or who gain their living without much trouble, do not know all the worth of the brave wife of a workman. She

is not only the manager of his bread, she is the manager of his courage and of his probity. What temptations would not enter the dwelling if she were not there to close the door! What ugly ideas which dare not form themselves because her look searches him to the bottom! The difficulty of avowing a bad intention forces us often to remain honest; for it is not so easy as might be believed for one to declare his wickedness to another, and for both to go in an evil way. Though one does so the boldness is not equal; there is always one who is troubled, who draws back, and it is more often the woman. Usually where she is listened to all goes straight and safely.

For my part I had made a happy choice. I found in Genevieve all I had hoped, and more. Such as I had seen her the first day, such I found her after marriage, and such she has ever remained. I have confided to her all my projects; I have told her all my business, and she has given me counsel without too much having the appearance of it. To my mind the greatest joy of the home is in this trust, which makes the heart, like the purse, always in common. If you are sad or angry or hopeful you

will find at least one to share these sentiments with you; you do not let all these little rivulets form a pond, as it were, until at length they burst the bank. That which the current of life brings to you each day is carried away by these confidences as by an overflow, and in this manner the soul keeps near its level.

Since my marriage I had imitated Mauricet. I had undertaken a little enterprise which had succeeded; but, like all those who begin, I had to bid low and work upon small resources. The good result was less in the profit than in the success. I had gained little, but I began to make myself known. Soon I found myself full of business. My exactitude and my activity had inspired confidence. Lacking capital, I obtained credit. It was necessary to have mind and hand in every thing, press things vigorously, safely, and complete them at the fixed time under penalty of a downfall. The task was hard, but in the end all went well; the returns and the payments were managed so as to balance, and I hoped that my efforts would finish by relieving my elbows a little. Once master of sufficient capital, things would go themselves; only for the time being it was

necessary to mount on the roof without a ladder until I made one, round by round.

Robert came to see us often enough. I noticed more than once that the little savings, intended for some rare pleasure-party or for the toilet of Genevieve passed invariably from the drawer of the aunt into the pocket of the nephew. I did not complain, for it was easier for me to sacrifice this little money than to afflict the excellent creature; she made up for these little prodigalities by so much work, frugality, and economy that I had the appearance of seeing nothing. In this I sought rather my peace than her advantage, and if I had had more sense I should have understood that my duty was to enlighten her. Because the defects of those who live at our side are a little matter and cause us no inconvenience it is not necessary to close the eyes, but, on the contrary, to look after and cure them.

I had gone to Burgundy to look over some work which was soon to be awarded. My absence was to last twelve days. Genevieve was alone with our boy, Marcel, who was only three years old. I have since learned from her what passed in my absence, and I will relate it.

The day after my departure Robert came to see her. He appeared troubled and low-spirited. To all questions he only responded by broken words and sighs. She kept him to dinner, but he ate nothing and became still more sad. Concerned, she pressed him more; then he said his life displeased him, and that some day he should throw it away like a pair of worn-out shoes. Genevieve, distressed, endeavored in vain to combat his discouragement; the more she talked the more Robert persevered in his resolution, giving her to understand, even, that nothing else remained for him to do. His aunt pressed him for explanation; but he persisted in his silence, intimating a guilt which he did not wish to confess. Quite frightened, she carried to his cradle the little Marcel, who had gone to sleep in her arms, and returned to Robert, decided to get his secret from him.

She found him with his elbows upon his knees and his head between his hands, like one in despair. Genevieve said every thing to him that her affection could invent. She spoke to him of his father, of the promise that she had made of taking his place; she named, one

after another, all the faults she could suppose him guilty of, asking him to respond alone by a word or a sign; but Robert always shook his head. Finally, at the end of all patience, she stopped, when he straightened up quickly and exclaimed that if he didn't have one hundred louis for the next day he was ruined. Genevieve started back as if he had demanded the crown of France.

"One hundred louis!" she repeated; "and whom do you expect to give them to you? Why do you need them? What do you wish to do with them?"

"I owe them," responded Robert.

And as his aunt looked at him with an air of doubt he began to unroll for her the list of his dissipations for the past three years. He had about him creditors' letters, unreceipted bills, and even assignments upon stamped paper; but the more he explained to Genevieve the more she waxed indignant and felt pity leave her.

"Well, then, since you have been able to spend such a sum you will have to earn it," she said, resolutely. "If I had it there in my apron and it belonged to me, and I had no use

for it, you should not have the first penny! Ah, they have reason for saying that God loves us better than we love ourselves! When he took my poor brother I had accused him in my heart, and now I see that he should have been thanked, for he has spared him grief and shame."

"Yes," interrupted Robert, with a sort of desperate audacity, "more shame than you believe; for I have not told all."

"And what yet remains to be said, unhappy wretch?" cried Genevieve.

Her nephew had risen, pale, and as if beside himself.

"Well, then," he said, showing the letters of his creditors, "it is necessary to pay all that under pain of going to prison, and I have paid it."

"You! How?"

"With a note."

She looked at him without comprehending.

"What note?" she demanded.

"A note signed with the name of your husband."

"What do you say, wretched one. A forgery?"

He lowered his head; Genevieve wrung her hands and cried. Both remained an instant without speaking. At last the aunt got up again, took Robert by the shoulders and shook him.

"You have lied to me!" she exclaimed; "you do not owe one hundred louis; you have not forged a note; you wish to draw the money from me."

The young man raised his head and reddened.

"Ah! I have lied," he stammered; "well, then, it is no use; let us say no more about it."

He took his hat and suddenly went out.

Genevieve let him go; but she passed a terrible night. She bolted upright at every noise, believing that they came to inform her of the arrest or death of Robert; she accused herself of hardness. Twice she put on her shawl to run to the lodging of her nephew, and twice a doubt that she could not dismiss retained her. The next day, toward the middle of the afternoon, an unknown man with great whiskers and covered with rings and charms presented himself with three notes, signed with my name.

They were the forgeries of which Robert had spoken!

When she saw them Genevieve became very pale, so pale that the stranger, who called himself Dumanoir, raised his eyebrows; finally, not knowing what to say, she asked him whom he held for their value.

"You can see," the stranger replied, showing on the backside the signatures of three or four indorsers.

"And you have need — immediately — of money?" said my wife, more and more troubled.

"Parbleu!" he replied, "I have two payments to make to-morrow, and I counted upon my returns. They told me your husband was good; I hope that they have not deceived me!"

In speaking thus he narrowly watched Genevieve, who said no more, but began to weep.

"Eh!" cried Dumanoir, "tears! Are these, by chance, all you have to give me? But are you not solvent then? Have you not the one hundred louis? Ah! a thousand thunders! I am ruined!"

He then got up with so many curses and

menaces against me that my poor frightened wife revealed every thing. At the announcement that the notes were forged Dumanoir made a bound.

"So I am robbed!" he cried; "and by whom? You know the forger, you are interested in him, for you did not at once reveal the fraud. I wish you to tell me who he is or I will denounce you. I will have you condemned as his accomplice."

Genevieve was about to reply when the door suddenly opened. It was Robert. At the cry that she made Dumanoir turned toward the young man, who, seeing the notes between his hands, fell upon his knees.

There was then a scene which my wife has never been able to describe to me, because when she thinks of it the unhappiness of it overcomes her power of utterance. All that I have known is that after many tears and prayers, seeing that the man with the notes had decided to arrest Robert, and the latter clinging to the window from which he threatened to throw himself to the court below, her heart could no longer keep her back. She ran to the secretary, which served me for cash-

box, took three hundred and fifty francs, which were all my reserve, and offered them to get back the notes. The creditor appeared at first to hesitate, but upon the observation that Robert was without resource and that in refusing this offer he would lose all, the exchange was made and Dumanoir left. After having rapidly thanked his aunt Robert followed him.

There was in his accent and his attitude so sudden a change that Genevieve was struck. Left alone and relieved of her emotion, she recalled all that had taken place and found something singular in it. The more she reflected the more the words and actions of Robert left her in doubt. She could not say what she suspected, but she felt that there was somewhere a lie! She hoped for enlightenment at the next visit of the young man. Two days passed without his re-appearing. Genevieve, whose disquietude increased, confided Marcel to a neighbor and hastened to seek him in the Rue Bertin-Poirée.

Reaching the fifth story at the landing of the little chamber inhabited by Robert, she saw the door open and an evil-faced man come

out holding a packet. Although changed in costume, and no more wearing the large whiskers, she recognized Dumanoir! Profiting by the movement of surprise which held her for an instant speechless, he quickly passed and descended. Genevieve pushed open Robert's door; there was no one there; but the furniture drawers had nothing in them, the closets were open and empty; some worn-out clothes were scattered about the floor. Surprised at this disorder, she went downstairs to the porter's lodge to ask explanations of him. The porter knew nothing and had seen nothing. All he could say was that Robert had entered the evening before with the man that she had passed on the stairs; they both appeared to be in a joyous mood and jingled gold coins in their pockets. Genevieve could no more doubt; the scene of the notes was a comedy, agreed upon between Robert and the pretended creditor; they had counted upon her fright, upon her feebleness; she was the victim of a swindle of which the son of her brother was the inventor. This idea was like the stroke of a knife in her heart. She put it from her; she waited for Robert all the

evening and yet the next day. She could not doubt, and yet she could not believe. Grief, indignation, disquietude, tormented her turn by turn. When I arrived she had lost for five days sleep and appetite. I found her so much changed that, alarmed, I demanded if she were sick.

"It is much worse," she replied to me in a choking voice.

And without waiting my questions, like one who has need of easing her mind, she began telling me in broken phrases what had passed since my departure. When she came to the three hundred and fifty francs given to Robert I interrupted by an exclamation of fright. I believed I had misunderstood, and ran to the secretary. The hiding-place held only the empty bag. My throat grew parched, my legs trembled so it was necessary to support myself against the wall. Genevieve regarded me with wide-open eyes, her hands limply hanging, her lips trembling like one in a fever. Seeing her in this condition, the anger which filled my heart relaxed and I said to her very gently:

"You have given the money; I shall not be

able to pay what I owe; that is all; we are ruined!"

In fact, I had three notes due the next day, and this reserve fund was intended to satisfy them. Its disappearance deranged all my calculations, destroyed my credit. I made Genevieve comprehend the situation. The poor creature was so startled that I wished to hide my own torment.

This good impulse made me content with myself and relieved my heart. The courage which I had at first shown through love for Genevieve came to me, little by little. I was still young; I had done no wrong; I felt that all my strength remained to begin over again. The important thing at this time was to honor my engagements. I spoke to Genevieve quietly, tenderly, like a man. I said to her that nothing was desperate, but that it was necessary to renounce for the moment all the little comforts of the house, keeping only the indispensable things and accepting again the coarser life of the poorer workmen. She responded only by weeping and pressing my hands when I had finished.

"Ah, you are still better than I believed,"

she said to me. "I only ask one more thing of the good God, and that is to let me live long enough to pay you for your kindness."

God has listened to her prayer, and she has fulfilled her promise, for that which she called my kindness has been paid in happiness, interest and principal.

That same evening I called upon the other builders of my acquaintance and made over to them some jobs for a little ready money which would pay for my materials. Meantime, Genevieve had called in some furniture-dealers and sold the better part of our movables. All together made up the sum of which I stood in need. My notes were paid without default.

But the breakdown had been noticeable; every one knew that I had again re-entered the regiment of the needy, and withdrew from me the consideration which had hitherto been accorded me. It was useless for me to bid for little contracts; no one any more wished to make me advances nor to give credit; they saw my downfall without considering my honesty. As a last unhappiness, Mauricet was absent; the need pressed; it was necessary

to resume the trowel and live by day's wages.

And still Robert had not yet re-appeared. In spite of all, Genevieve kept for him an incurable affection; I saw that she was sad because she did not know what had become of him. Two months had passed, and for my part I endeavored to forget the nephew, when a policeman presented himself in my home. Happily, I was alone. He showed me a bit of paper with my name and address half effaced; they had found it upon a murdered man. A little troubled, I followed the officer to the morgue and there I recognized the corpse of Robert. He had still around his neck the cord and the stone that they had tied to him to drown him. The accomplice of his theft had wished to profit alone, and, as it so often happens, the crime had been punished by a new crime.

Genevieve knew the thing only a long time after. So far the murderers have not been discovered; perhaps they have submitted in their turn to the fate which they had meted out to Robert, for in evil as in good it is rare that one does not harvest that which

he sows. In regard to us, the recollection of the unhappy being who had thrown his wickedness across our happiness was soon lost in the hardest trials; the bad days approached, and we were going to be, as Friend Mauricet said, guaranteed the storm without cape or umbrella.

CHAPTER X.

UPHILL WORK.

IT is a hard thing to come down again in life after one has once climbed up, and black bread seems hard to chew when the teeth have begun to soften on white bread. I presented a good face to this bad fortune; but at bottom I felt a suppressed vexation which made me unhappy and gave, as they say, a bad taste to life. Although she had a determined air Genevieve was no more resigned. We both sang to defy our ill fortune, but not for gayety. For fear of exposing our hearts we kept silent, enveloping our sadness in our pride and growing slightly hardened. I felt it, but without power to do otherwise. I was like one who totters; to remain upright it was necessary to be rigid.

One evening I returned from work with the sack upon my shoulder, and I walked the streets whistling. I went without hurrying, for the sight of my home did not rejoice my eye as

formerly. I could not accustom myself to the empty gaps in the furnishings, to the walls without hangings, and, above all, to the care-worn air of Genevieve. Formerly all was neat and cheerful, every thing welcomed me; within there was an eternal ray of the sun; but since our downfall one would have said that the cardinal points had changed; from the south we found ourselves carried to the north. I passed along then with short steps, without much noticing a fine snow which fell as through a sifter and powdered the icy roadway. Having nearly reached the end of the faubourg, I perceived an old woman wearily pushing before her one of those small wagons which are the rolling shops of the people of Paris. The ice rendered the task doubly laborious. The snow streaked the great wool shawl in which she was enveloped and filled the folds of the handkerchief upon her head. She breathed with difficulty, stopping at each minute with spent strength, then redoubling her effort. I was filled, involuntarily, with pity. The memory of my mother crossed my mind, and I joined the vender, who had stopped for breath.

"Hallo, old woman," I said to her, smiling, "that is too much for you."

"That is the truth, my son," she responded, wiping her face where the sweat mingled with the snow; "strength goes with age while the load always keeps its weight; but the good God does every thing well; he will not abandon the poor people."

I asked her where she was going. She pointed out the way to me and was about to proceed. I then put my hand upon one of the shafts.

"Let me," I said to her gently; "it is my road. It will cost me no more to go over it with your barrow."

And without waiting her response I pushed the cart before me. The old woman made no resistance; she simply thanked me and walked at my side. I learned then that she had come from buying provisions at the markets which she was to sell again. Whatever the season or the weather she continued to run about Paris until she had disposed of her load. For thirty years she had lived by this trade, which had yielded her the means of raising three sons."

"But when I had them, tall and strong, they took them away from me," said the poor

woman. "Two have died in the army and the last is upon an English prison-ship."

"So," I exclaimed, "you find yourself alone without other resource than your courage!"

"And the Protector of those who have no other," she added. "The good God must have something to do in his paradise; and how would he pass his time if he did not take care of creatures like me? I can tell you, when one is old and miserable the idea that the King of all regards you, that he judges you and keeps your account, that sustains you! When I am so tired that my feet can no longer carry me, well, then I get onto my knees and say to him softly what troubles me, and when I get up I always have a lighter heart. You are still too young to feel this, but a day will come when you will comprehend why they teach little children to say, "Our Father who art in heaven!"

I did not answer. I felt that light was come! The old woman continued to talk in the same way as far as the end of the faubourg. In all her great trials she had sought a consolation higher than earth in a world where nothing could change. Listening to her speech my

heart throbbed. I regarded this limping old woman, with her shaking head already bent as if to take up her winding-sheet, and I was astonished to find her stronger than Genevieve and I. It was, then, true that man had need of another point of support than men, and that to keep himself firmly upon this scaffolding which composes his life it is necessary to have a cord knotted in the heavens!

When I left the old woman near the city gate she thanked me; but, in truth, it was I who owed her gratitude, for she had re-awakened ideas which had slept in the depths of my mind. I reached home quite preoccupied with my encounter. This evening—why, I did not know—Genevieve was uncommonly sad; it seemed to me even that her eyes were red. We supped and said nothing. The child slept. Then we sat near the dying embers of the fire. It was only when the clock struck that Genevieve got up with a sigh. It was the bed-time hour. Then I got up also. I took the hand of the dear woman and drew her against my shoulder.

"It is too long a time that we have carried our grief all alone," I said to her in a low voice; "let us ask God to take his part."

And I knelt; Genevieve did the same, saying nothing. I began then to repeat all the prayers I had ever learned in my childhood and which have remained since like a deposit in a corner of my heart. As the words returned to my memory they seemed to find a sense which I had never grasped before; it was a language which I comprehended for the first time. I cannot say whether something similar passed through the mind of Genevieve, but I soon heard her quietly weeping. When I got up she embraced me, sobbing.

"You have had an idea which saves us," she said to me. "Now that you have made me think again of God I feel that I can regain my courage!"

And, in fact, from that day every thing went better in the house. Our hearts were relieved of their tension. We began again to have better thoughts. The evening prayer was always reposeful and softening. Poor old woman! While she told me the story of her life she hardly knew what good she did me. I have never since seen her, but more than once Genevieve and I have blessed her.

"It is easy to see that the times of the good

fairies have not yet passed," she said to me, "since you have found one who for payment of a light service has given you a talisman of resignation."

Although forced to return to the trowel I had not lost hope of again undertaking contracts, and it often distressed me to see desirable jobs pass into other hands. One in particular tempted me because of its profit. It was needful, unhappily, to attempt it to advance some hundred francs! I returned to the stone-yard sad enough because of my inability to seize so happy a chance, when two large hands grasped me by the shoulders. I quickly turned; it was Mauricet.

The master-mason, kept now for many months in Burgundy, had returned to Paris upon business, leaving again the same evening. He made me go into an eating-house, and, in spite of all I could say, forced me to eat a second breakfast with him. Prosperity had fattened Mauricet, who was dressed in a splendid vest of fine cloth, a long-haired beaver, and a cherry-silk cravat. The heart was the same, but the tone had raised a notch. Mauricet was full of self-confidence since he found himself at the

head of twenty workmen. I had always seen him so modest that his assurance appeared to me simply the consciousness of his prosperity.

Since his arrival in Paris he had been vaguely informed of my downfall and wished to know all about it. When I had told him the facts he struck the table with the sealed bottle of Bordeaux which he had ordered in spite of my refusal to drink.

"A thousand thunders! Why didn't you write about the thing to me?" he exclaimed. "I should have found enough money to settle your business. What are you doing now? Come! Where are you? Cannot I put a little chalk into your mortar?"

I made known to him my position, saying a word of the job which presented itself.

"And you only need five hundred francs?" asked Mauricet.

I replied that this sum would suffice me and more. He immediately called; a waiter entered.

"A pen and ink!" demanded the mason.

I looked at him with surprise.

"You do not understand what I wish to do with this trash here; is it not true?" he laugh-

ingly said to me. "In fact, I am no more an advocate of the black and the white than in the past; but it is necessary to bray for the donkeys. When I saw then that they could only do business with the quill and the inkstand, my faith, I said, 'Bring up the rear-guard!' And to-day I use them like any one else."

"You have learned to write!" I exclaimed.

"You shall see!" said Mauricet, winking his eye at me.

He had drawn from a portfolio a stamped paper, upon which he made me write a draft for five hundred francs. When I had finished it he signed his name in unequally written letters in imitation of print.

"Now," he said to me, when the painful operation was completed, "present this to Périgaux, and you shall have your money on the spot. The signature of Father Mauricet is known in their shop, and I can procure money when I wish."

They gave me the money in reality without any difficulty, and the next day I undertook the job for which it was designed. Every thing went well at first. The work was quickly carried on and finished before the time set. I had

been able from the first payments to return to Mauricet his money. This new venture brought me into the swim again, and I began to feel myself rising, when a lawsuit against our principal contractor stopped every thing. My fate and that of ten others were intimately connected with his. We found our hands tied without any means of acting or of drawing out. In the meantime, the individual obligations of each one remained; the period of payment for unused materials arrived; the dues succeeded one another pitilessly. It was necessary to face all the attacks with "arms at support," as they say; find each day some new expedient; obtain terms, to carry forward, to balance debts and credits. My days were employed in this profitless work. I gained nothing, and my resources were becoming exhausted. While I employed my time saving myself from failure Genevieve and the child lacked necessaries.

I racked my brains without power of hastening matters. The lawsuit was always about to be judged and yet was ceaselessly deferred. One day some paper had been forgotten, another day the lawyer was absent, the tribunal took a vacation, or the cpponent had asked an

adjournment! Meanwhile, the weeks and the months ran along. Our poor home resembled those crews becalmed in mid-ocean, who each day reduce the ration, looking in vain to the horizon to see if the clouds announce the return of the wind. I have had hard trials in my life, but none comparable to this. Ordinarily, the misfortunes which strike us leave room for action; one can seek solace or salvation in work; but here all efforts were useless; there was nothing to do but cross the arms and wait.

At length this powerlessness rendered me gloomy and fretful. Without knowing any one else to blame, I found fault with Genevieve; taking no account of the poor creature's efforts to disguise from me our misery, of her work to soften it, one would have said that I wished the privations which she supported. At the bottom my irritation was still that of love; it came of my grief in seeing her suffer. I would have given my blood, drop by drop, to buy her comfort and repose of spirit; but my good-will was changed to bad humor because of my lack of success; it was like a thorn-hedge upon which I tore her in vexation because I was unable to make a covering to defend her.

One day in particular I returned more soured than common. I had passed three hours with the lawyer, who chatted with his friends and whom I heard laugh while I was gnawed at the heart. It was necessary to wait the end of their jolly stories; then, when my turn was come, I found a man who yawned in listening to me, who knew nothing of my business, and by whom I had been directed to his first clerk, then absent. I returned home then, swelling with wrath against the dispensers of justice who file away in their boxes our fortune, our repose, our honor, and who, often as not, do not know even what they have given them to protect. To finish me, I had been refused the payment of my last bill.

As if every thing sought to irritate my melancholy, I found Genevieve in a festive mood. She went about singing and received me with a joyous exclamation. I rudely asked her what happy thing had happened since my departure, if we had received a fortune from America. She responded pleasantly, put her arm about my neck, and led me to the almanac suspended against the chimney.

"Well, then?" I demanded.

"Well, then! Do you not see the day, sir?" she said, gayly; "it is the twenty-fifth."

"Yes," I replied, ill-humoredly, releasing myself; "and soon it will be the thirtieth, the day when my notes fall due. A plague upon the notes and the almanacs!"

She had an air of grieved astonishment.

"What has happened, Peter Henry?" she resumed, uneasily; "have you learned some bad news?"

"I have learned nothing, as usual."

"Then," she continued, passing an arm through mine, "put over your anxieties until to-morrow and keep to-day for happiness."

I looked at her in a way to prove that I did not understand.

"Come, ugly man!" she said, poutingly, "don't you know that it is the anniversary of our marriage?"

I had in reality forgotten it. The years preceding this anniversary were occasions of rejoicing and tender feeling, but this time it was quite otherwise. The recollection of past happiness rendered the present sufferings more bitter. The comparison which I had made in my thought excited within me a sort of despair,

and I dropped into a chair muttering maledictions. Genevieve, dismayed, wished to know what was the matter.

"What is the matter?" I cried. "God pardon me! One would say that you had never heard me speak of it! What is the matter? Well, then, to be sure! I have debts which I cannot pay and creditors who will not wait. I have a lawsuit which will ruin me while I wait to gain it. I have three mouths to feed every day without any other resource than two arms which cannot work. Ah! What is the matter? do you ask? I regret now that I did not break my back the day I fell from the building, because then I was only a workman without obligations and without family, and only a coffin at four francs would have settled my account!"

All this was said with a frenzy which made the dear woman tremble; she looked at me, the tears coming in her eyes.

"In the name of God, Peter Henry, speak no more in this way," she said to me; "never tell me that you regret living unless you wish also to make me die. You have been tormented all day, poor man, and you are beside

yourself; but forget for to-day these affairs and think only of those who love you."

I would perhaps have done what she asked, for her voice had touched my heart, when there was a knock at the door; a policeman entered.

"Pardon me," he said, politely; "I have come up because you are breaking the regulations, and that I must report you on account of the pot of flowers in your window."

I was going to reply that he was mistaken when Genevieve ran to the window-ledge and quickly withdrew a gillyflower, still wrapped in its leaf of white paper. She declared that she had just returned from buying it and put it in that place, where it was safely retained by many bars. The policeman listened patiently to all her explanations; but, after having stated the law regarding the offense, he took our names, informed us that we would have to present ourselves before the police court and pay the fine, and, saluting us, retired.

This unexpected interruption and the prospect of new expense to which we were going to be condemned rudely checked my returning good humor. When Genevieve wished to

speak to me I got up exasperated, cursing the caprice which came thus to suddenly add to our misery. I strode up and down, talking in a loud, excited voice, while my wife, pale and trembling, looked at me, saying nothing. I had broken out when she had endeavored to speak, and now her silence increased my anger Beside myself, I seized the flower-pot, first cause of the dispute, and started for the window to throw it into the street, when a cry from Genevieve stopped me. The poor woman was near the cradle of the baby, whom I had waked up; she pressed one hand against her breast and her other was extended toward me.

"Don't break it, Peter Henry," she said to me in a voice which I shall never forget; "it is the flower of our anniversary!"

I held the gillyflower between my hands, hesitating about what I should do with it. I recalled, then, that every year at this season Genevieve had celebrated the date of our marriage by the purchase of one of these flowers which my mother had cultivated at the Bois-Riant. At this thought I felt a shaking within me; all my anger suddenly left me, it burst like a

fountain from my heart. Genevieve immediately ran toward me and threw herself with the child into my arms.

When all was pardoned and forgotten we sat down to the supper-table. What had happened had hindered my wife from preparing any thing; I would not let her go out to get what we lacked. We supped gayly upon bread and radishes, the gillyflower in the midst of the table perfuming our feast.

CHAPTER XI.

FATHER MAURICET'S TROUBLE.

WE had obtained a judgment which recognized our right and assured a part of our debt upon the security of the contractor, but the formalities had not yet been all fulfilled. Genevieve and I were put to all sorts of expedients, living by chance and never having in the cupboard bread for the next day. My days were divided between some passing work, running between the parties interested in the lawsuit, and visits to the palace of justice. I have thought since that it would have been wiser to have surrendered all and begun afresh, like the child newly born; but I was allured by these few thousand francs which they showed to me always in perspective, and I could not dismiss my hope.

Months thus passed. I had lost the habit of regular occupation, my life was deranged. Instead of making my way with the workers I found myself stopped among those poor

wretches who eat their dry bread to the fumes of a roast on the spit which is constantly promised them and which always turns. I employed the present to keep in the line to the gate of the future.

On top of it all the child fell very sick. I was forced to go to my business and leave all the cares to Genevieve; but at the first moment of liberty I hastily returned. The malady did not decrease; on the contrary I heard the wails of the poor creature and its stifled breathing. When its mother or I leaned over its bed it extended its little hands and looked at us with a supplicating air; it had the appearance of asking mercy. Accustomed to receive every thing from us, it believed that we could give it health! Our voices, our caresses, encouraged it a moment; then the suffering seized it again; it repulsed us; it seemed to reproach us; it twisted its little limbs with cries which cut us to the heart. At first I had combated the mother's fears, but at length I felt incapable of saying any thing; I stood there with crossed arms, displeased at her despair, which augmented my own, and not having the strength to give her any hope. The doctor

also kept his counsel; he came to the child's cradle, made a hasty examination, ordered what he wished, and then disappeared without a word of consolation; one would have said it was an architect visiting mortar and stones. Sometimes I would have stopped him, grasping him by the arms and crying to him to speak and take away from us the illusion or the care; but he was too quick for me; that which was for us the source of so much anguish was for him only his day's employ.

O, the sad hours, my God! passed near this little bed! What long and cheerless nights! How I have desired at spells the power to hasten the time, thus reaching at once the depth of my wretchedness! I have since recalled having read that such an experience was still one of God's kindnesses. In making us feel so much anguish he renders us less sensitive to the last stroke; the unhappiness of the waiting makes it desirable; our thought runs to meet it, and when the blow strikes us we accept it as a solace.

After an illness of fifteen days the child died. I was prepared for it, but it seems that Genevieve was not. Mothers never give up

those whom they have brought into the world; they cannot believe in the possibility of being separated from them. The days passed by; nothing consoled my poor wife. I found her seated before the empty cradle or handling the little garments of the dead child, giving to each one a tear and a kiss. I had reasoned with her and chided, she listening to me patiently without raising her head, like a poor heart whose spring is broken. This despondency finally infected me. I relaxed in my turn; I took no interest in any thing; I passed entire hours standing before the window drumming upon the glass and gazing out abstractedly. We both became benumbed by our grief.

We had not seen Mauricet in the two years that he had lived in Burgundy; they had only told me that the old master-workman was engaged in great enterprises. Two or three times I had had the idea of informing him of my embarrassment and of asking him for a stroke on the shoulder; I hardly know what pride had restrained me. Now that I supposed him among the great financiers I was less at ease with him; I feared that he

would suspect me of wishing to trade on our old friendship.

We had, then, the seeming of being a little forgotten, when, one evening, I saw the new contractor arrive, not in a carriage, as I should have expected, but on foot and covered with a traveler's blouse over his other clothes. He descended from the *diligence* and came to us asking dinner.

At the first glance I saw a change in him. He talked as freely and as loudly as ever, he laughed at every turn, was restless, and asked more questions than he waited replies; but all this movement and all this talk appeared forced; his gayety was feverish. He scarcely spoke to us of the death of our child; when I wished to speak of my affairs he interrupted me to talk of his own. He brought notes and memoranda which he explained to me, begging me at the same time to put them in order. Although his manners had a little repulsed me I did as he desired. During this work Mauricet paced about the chamber, his hands in his pockets, and softly whistling. From time to time he stopped before the sheet of paper which I had covered with figures as if he had

wished to divine the result; then he resumed his whistling and his walking. It took much time to complete the calculation; when I had finished I made it known to the master-workman; the liabilities were almost double the assets. At the announcement of this result Mauricet could not restrain an exclamation:

"Are you certain of the thing?" he demanded in an accent which seemed to me altered.

I explained to him the reasons which must necessarily bring this result. The first was the numerous loans and the accumulations of interest, with which he had seemed not to trouble himself. In the absence of written accounts, he had evidently deceived himself. He listened to my explanations, supporting both hands upon the table and gazing into my face.

"I comprehend, I comprehend!" he said, when I had finished; "I have let enter into my stable all the horses they wished to lend me, without thinking their forage would ruin me. See where one is led when he does not know how to make your little fly-tracks and doesn't know your conjuring book. Those who

have not a head for books ought to do business from hand to hand, and not throw in the papers. They are like the river, you see, which always finishes by drowning itself."

I asked him with concern if there were no other resources than those which I had noted and if this was his entire schedule.

"Not at all, not at all!" he quickly continued. "You tell me there are twenty-three thousand francs lacking? Well, then! I'll find them; they are elsewhere."

And as I insisted more strongly, "When I tell you that all can be arranged!" he interrupted with impatience; "it was only to see, as they say, to the bottom of the well, and now it is done. Twenty-three thousand francs deficit! Well, then, that is good; the rest I will go all alone. Let us dine, my old friend; I am as hungry as thirty wolves."

In spite of this last affirmation he ate hardly any thing; but to make up he smoked very much and talked still more; one would have said that he sought to forget himself. When we left the table the day began to wane. Mauricet gathered his papers, put them in order, regarded some time the account which I had

drawn up as if he had been able to read it; he said nothing, but it seemed to me that his hand trembled. He afterward put them all upon the table and began walking again up and down the room, and finally asked where our son was!

Genevieve turned with a cry; I looked him in the face stupefied. When the child had died we had written him, and since he had arrived we had spoken of this loss; he perceived his distraction and took his head between his hands.

"What! Is there, then, no more brain here!" he murmured in a sort of rage. "Pardon me, friends; it is the fault of Peter Henry; he has made me drink too much; but no matter; I should not have been able to forget your grief."

He sat down and remained some time in deep dejection. I asked him again if his affairs disturbed him.

"Why is this?" he suddenly continued, "Have I complained? Have I asked any thing?" And softening, all at once, "Hold! let us not speak any more of business," he resumed; "let us talk of you and Genevieve.

You are always happy; is it not true? When one loves, when one is young, and when one owes nothing! Ah! if I were of your age, I! But what! Youth cannot be and have been; each one his turn. I have already seen go by a part of those of my time—your father Jerome, Madeleine, and many others still! Away with sadness! Let us live until death takes us."

I was astonished at these signs of incoherence. Mauricet had not drank enough to be affected to this extent; his cheerfulness did not re-assure me; I saw in him a wandering air which disturbed me. As he laughed alone he soon stopped. Genevieve spoke gently to him of his children in the country, who were prospering in a small way. Then he softened and praised them at length; afterward he broke off suddenly, got up with a desperate effort, and said in a broken voice:

"Come, come, friends, we have talked enough; the moment has come for me to attend to my affairs."

He looked some time for his hat, which was before him, fumbled with it as if he could not find his head, made a step toward the door,

then stopped to take out his watch, which he placed upon his papers.

"I had better leave you every thing," he said, stammering; "I should lose them; it is safer here."

We endeavored to retain him. He refused. I then wished to go with him. He grew angry and quickly left; but, getting half-way down the stairs, he returned.

"Come, come," he said, "let us not leave each other with bad feelings!"

He embraced my wife, pressed my hand, and disappeared.

We lingered upon the landing, much disturbed. When we no more heard his steps upon the stairs Genevieve turned quickly toward me.

"O, Peter Henry, there is something the matter with him!" she said.

"That is my thought," I responded.

"We must not leave Mauricet to himself."

"But he gets angry if I wish to follow him."

"Let us go together," she continued, tying her bonnet and putting on a little woolen shawl.

I ran for my hat, and we descended. Night had come, and we could not see Mauricet. We took our course to the first street turning. There, by good luck, we recognized the master-workman. He walked with a step sometime quick, sometime slow, making gestures, speaking in a high voice; but we could not hear what he said. He followed many streets at hazard, turning sometimes upon his steps like a man who takes no care about his route. Finally he struck the markets, and from there turned toward the quays.

Reaching the Pont du Chatelet he stopped again, then turned suddenly toward one of the slopes which descend to the river. Genevieve pressed my arm with a stifled cry. The same thought had come to us both. We ran together. The night was already black. Mauricet glided before us like a shadow. He was hidden under one of the bridge arches. When I got there he had taken off his coat and was approaching the water, which swirled in a great whirlpool at the foot of a pier. He heard us coming. He wished to throw himself in before we reached him. I only had time to seize him by the middle of the body. He turned with a

curse, the darkness hindering his seeing me; he recognized me only by my voice.

"What are you doing here? What do you wish?" he cried. "Did I not tell you to leave me alone? Take away your hands, Peter Henry! A thousand thunders! I tell you, let me go!"

"No, I shall not leave you!" I exclaimed, trying to force him back toward the bank.

He made an effort to release himself.

"But you do not comprehend, wretch, that I am ruined!" he cried. "I can no more do honor to my signature! Curse the day that I learned to put it upon paper! While I did not know how to write I kept my reputation faithfully; I had not bound myself by these notes, which God confound! But now the thing is done there is no more going back, I must be a bankrupt or die. I have chosen! Do not oppose me, Peter Henry. I am in a moment, you see, when nothing shall stop me! I am capable of any thing. In the name of God, or of the devil, leave me!"

He struggled with fury. In spite of my resistance he would have escaped me, when Genevieve threw her arms around his neck and cried:

"Mauricet, think of your children!"

This was like the stroke of a club. The unhappy man groaned. I felt him totter, and he fell sitting upon the sand. We heard him weep. Genevieve knelt at his side, I on the other, and we began to encourage him, weeping with him also; but I found nothing good to say to him, while each word of Genevieve went to his heart. There is no one like the women for this science! The master-workman, a moment before so terrible, was now like an infant, incapable of resistance. He told us, sobbing, all that he had suffered in the past eight days since he began to see clearly into his affairs. I understood then that his incapacity to keep accounts had been the true cause of his ruin. Carried away by the current of a large business, nothing had warned him of the danger, and he only knew it when he was wrecked.

I profited by this same ignorance to persuade Mauricet that all was not desperate; that his situation offered resources that he himself knew not, and that the question alone was to disentangle them. The master-workman was like all those who affect to scorn writing and figures; at the bottom he believed they held a

secret power to which every thing must give way. We succeeded then in bringing him back to our house, if not consoled, at least strengthened.

In truth, the peril was only delayed. I knew that by the next day the bad thoughts would return to him. I feared, above all, the kind of shame which these would-be suicides have. Lest others believe that they have been cowardly they return to their first intention with obstinacy; they regard death as the sole means of proving their courage, and out of self-esteem they kill themselves! I warned Genevieve, who promised to watch without intermission. In fact, she alone could do it without irritating Mauricet. The brave hearts are powerless against women and children.

In regard to myself, I had to see what could be done to avoid a breakdown. I passed a part of the night verifying the balance of the master-mason, but, however I figured and repeated the calculations, the deficit remained always about the same. In continuing the business already engaged he had a good chance of recovering himself and "clearing up," as they say in the jargon of the trade. But for that it

was necessary to have money or credit, and where could they be found? I had very much puzzled my brain without any means presenting itself. I tried every-where the next day, but all my attempts were useless. I was sent from one to another with rude rebuffs. Seeing me take so much heart in the affairs of Mauricet, they believed me interested, and I injured him without serving him.

However, I persisted, decided to do my duty to the end. The master-mason had fallen into a mute discouragement. One could not expect from him any effort to help himself. When I attempted to send him out he said to me simply, "The cords to my legs are cut; leave me where I am!"

I was at my wit's end, when I recalled the rich contractor who had formerly encouraged me to instruct myself. I had often thought of him in my own embarrassment, but without wishing to ask aid from him. I always recalled our first interview, in which he had proved to me that success was the recompense of zeal and of talent. Confessing to him that I had failed was to admit that I had shown neglect or incapacity. Right or wrong, I had always

recoiled from exposing myself to this confusion. For Mauricet I had less scruple.

I feared that the millionaire had forgotten my face, but at the first glance of the eye he recognized me. That was something; yet I was troubled when it was necessary for me to tell him the motive of my visit. I had well prepared my story; at the moment of uttering it I became confused. The contractor comprehended that I was in business trouble and that I came to him asking money. I saw him raise his eyebrows and tighten his lips like a man who would express defiance. This suddenly gave me back my courage.

"Pray notice that I do not come for myself," I exclaimed, "but for a brave companion who has been to me almost a father and whom you know—Father Mauricet. What he asks of you is neither an advance nor a sacrifice, but only to save him from the shame of a failure without doing you any harm. It is the question of a good action which perhaps will bring you nothing, but which ought not to cost you any thing."

"Let me see," said the contractor, who continued to regard me.

I then explained to him rapidly all the affair

without making words, but without losing the thread of my discourse, and like one capitalist who converses with his equal. By force of will I had risen above myself. He listened to all, asked me many questions, demanded the papers in the case, and told me to come back the next day.

I went away hopeless. The thing seemed so clear that he could not put off responding if he had wished to accept. This adjournment had certainly no other end than of giving to the refusal an appearance of reflection. I returned, however, upon the hour agreed.

"I have examined every thing," the contractor said to me. "Your calculations are right. I will take charge of the affair. You can tell Mauricet to come and see me. He is a brave man, and we will find some employment for him which shall satisfy him."

CHAPTER XII.

AT MONTMORENCY.

AFTER the departure of Mauricet I busied myself winding up my own affairs. Justice had finally pronounced, and I could free myself. My debts paid, all I had left was some stamped paper. I had satisfied all my engagements, but I found myself for the second time penniless.

I was going to take up the trowel again when an architect, under whom I had worked, proposed that I should quit Paris and establish myself at Montmorency. He assured me work there for the season and promised to push me.

"It is a good place," he said to me. "There is only one master-mason, a good workman, but brutal, and whom one employs for lack of a better. With a little effort the better part of the work will come to you. Here you will always vegetate between the great contractors, who will suppress you. It is better to be a tree among bushes than a bush in the forest."

I too well felt these reasons to hesitate. All was soon concluded. The architect took me to the work, explained what I should do, and I returned to Paris to fetch Genevieve.

The moment of departure was hard. It was the first time that I had left the great city to live! I was accustomed to its dirt and its pavements as the peasant is to verdure or the odor of hay. I had my familiar streets where I passed every day. My eye was accustomed to the people and to the houses. All were become by long usage like a part of myself. To abandon Paris was to get away from at the same time my tastes, my recollections, my entire life. The neighbors who had known us for a long time came to their doors to bid us adieu. Some of them pitied us! This made me assume a cheerful face. I greeted them laughingly. For nothing in the world would I let them see my sadness. I very well felt that this forced departure was a humiliation. It proved that bad luck had been stronger than myself. I wished to protest against the defeat by having the appearance of not feeling it. As for Genevieve, who had fewer regrets, she did not think to hide her tears. Loaded with bas-

kets and packages, the poor woman responded to all the salutations and all the wishes of a happy journey by thanks accompanied with sighs. She stopped at each door to embrace the children for the last time. I was impatient at these delays, and I went along whistling in order to keep myself in countenance. Finally, at the turn of the street, when the last house of the faubourg had disappeared, I breathed more freely.

Genevieve had rejoined me. We climbed together into the wagon which carried our poor furnishings and took the road to Montmorency. God knows how many maledictions I addressed to myself on the way at the slowness of the horses and at the halts of the driver. The blood boiled in my veins. Yet I kept quiet. I feared that if I spoke I should say too much. Genevieve felt like myself. At last we reached the place as the day closed.

The little lodging which I had taken was at the end of the village, in a narrow street where the wagon had trouble to pass. I opened the door with a pang at my heart. I motioned Genevieve to enter, and I returned to aid the carrier unload the furniture. I did not wish to

see the disappointment of the poor woman over our miserable habitation.

She comprehended, without doubt, what I felt, for she re-appeared soon upon the threshold with a smile, declaring it was all she could wish. She aided in carrying things and putting them in place. When we had finished the night had shut down, the wagon departed, and we were alone.

Our quarters were upon the ground floor, which was lower than the street itself. The floors had formerly been paved, but the broken tiles formed now a kind of uneven and dirty macadam. A little window, opening upon the court of a neighbor, let in smoky odors, and a high chimney, which occupied almost all the width of the gable, let fall thick volumes of smoke. I contemplated this sad den with a sort of stupor. Whether I had badly judged at the first appearance, whether my disposition was different, I now found an unwholesomeness and dilapidation which had not at first struck me. Our furnishings put in place and the presence of Genevieve, far from making the place cheerful, seemed to make it more gloomy. Adorned with all that could embellish it, the

lodging left no possible room for doubt and showed itself in its actual ugliness. In spite of her efforts to appear satisfied Genevieve felt an uncomfortableness which she could not hide. She had seated herself by the hearth, supporting her elbows upon her knees, and looking in a fixed way before her. I was at the other end of the room with crossed arms. A little candle burning low in a tin candlestick gave us enough light to let us see our sadness. Genevieve was the first to rouse out of this depression. She got up, sighing, sought the basket of provisions which she had brought from Paris, and began to lay the table-cloth. But bread was wanting. I went out to buy it.

The baker's shop was some distance off; when I entered many neighbors were gathered upon the threshold; they were listening to a large man who spoke very loudly and with an appearance of anger. I paid no attention at first, while I waited for the loaf which some one had gone to get in the back shop, when I heard my name pronounced by the large man.

"He names himself Peter Henry, called the Conscientious," he exclaimed; "but you may wring my neck if I don't change his name into

that of the Famished. Even if I have to sell my last shirt I will make him more bother and do him more mischief than are necessary to ruin him!"

"In fact, if we let these Parisians establish themselves in the country they will eat our bread to the last mouthful," observed a neighbor, from whose black hands I recognized a blacksmith.

"Without taking into account that they always end in bankruptcy," added the grocer. "In proof, there is the watch-maker from the great place, who has gone off without paying me."

"And look you, the new master-mason will not have a better memory," resumed the large man. "It is my opinion that he is some sharper who has come here to hide from the police."

Until now I had listened without knowing whether I ought to have the appearance of hearing; but at these last words the blood mounted to my head and I turned toward the door.

"Peter Henry has no need of hiding from any body," I exclaimed, "and the proof is that it is he who speaks to you."

There was a general movement among the spectators. The large man approached the door-sill.

"Ah! ah! do we see the bird here?" he said, regarding me with an insolent air. "Well, I should not have recognized him from the plumage; for a master from the great city he has an appearance a little too simple."

"You shall see from the work I know how to do," I replied, sharply. "Insults only prove jealousy or malice; it is by his work that the workman must be judged."

"It remains to be seen whether any one wishes your work," resumed the master-mason, gruffly. "You have taken away from me one customer; but if you take away a second, as true as I am named Jean Fèrou I will break your back at the first chance."

I felt that I became pale, not from fear, but from vexation. This big figure, red with anger, and those little gray eyes, which shot out menace, stirred my blood. I looked the master-mason in the face.

"We shall see about that, Master Fèrou!" I replied, restraining myself. "The people whom one wishes to crush do not always allow

it. Until now I have defended my skin against many a bad fellow, and I shall hope not to leave it at Montmorency."

"Well, then, all right!" cried the master-mason, who pushed back his cap; "we will see what you know how to do with your fists. I'll settle the matter here and now, and it shall not be said that Jean Fèrou will let the grass be cut under his feet by a bungler from Paris."

I did not respond; my anger increased, and I felt near exploding. I quickly took the bread which I had come to buy, and was going out, when the baker demanded payment. I replied that I had put the money on the counter; but the baker declared that he had not received it. A dispute ensued, which the interference of the master-mason helped to sharpen. Feeling my honor at stake, I sustained my affirmation with persistence. In the heat of the strife a little girl who was present declared, in a low voice, that I held the money hidden between my fingers. I quickly opened my hand; was it truly there? In my trouble I had taken from the counter a twelve-sous piece and held it without knowing it!

The movement among the spectators at this revelation made me dizzy. I wished to stammer an explanation, but, feeling myself suspected, I was in doubt. I was unknown, surrounded by ill-disposed people, without any means of proving that my error had been involuntary. I comprehended that all my justifications were useless; so, suddenly cutting short, I paid the baker and turned to leave.

The master-mason stood at the opening of the door, one shoulder leaning against the casing and his feet propped against the other side. He sneeringly regarded me.

"Missed the trick!" he said to me, ironically; "for to-day he has to pay for his bread at the regular price."

"Let me pass!" I cried, out of patience.

"Why! why!" he resumed, in a tone more and more provoking, "one would say that the Parisian gets mad."

"The Parisian has had enough of your insults," I replied, trembling with anger, "and you must make room."

"Truly! And if I don't wish to?"

"Then I'll make it!"

"Ah, indeed! Come on, then!"

I advanced resolutely to him; he was leaning against the wall with crossed arms.

"Jean Fèrou, will you let me go out?" I demanded, with closed fists.

"No," he said, sneeringly.

I seized him by the arm and pushed him roughly to force him to make room for me.

He doubtless did not expect such boldness, for he was on the point of losing his balance; but he regained himself immediately with an oath, turned upon me with raised hand, and struck me a blow on the head which stunned me. I endeavored to put myself on the defensive, and sustained the struggle until I tripped against the door-sill, drawing the master-mason in my downfall. Falling under him, I soon felt his knees upon my chest, while his fists pounded my face. The spectators, who had let him alone until then, decided, finally, to separate us. They pulled Master Férou off from me with trouble; they put under my arm the bread which I had bought, showed me the road, and I mechanically took the way to my lodging.

I went like a drunken man; all my limbs ached, and I was broken-hearted. At the sight

of the house I relaxed my steps; I feared the questionings of Genevieve when she should see my bruised and bloody face. I could not sustain the idea of relating to her the humiliations which I had suffered. Happily, she had yielded to the day's fatigue; I found her in bed and asleep.

I hastened to put out the candle, which still burned, and got into bed. But I sought sleep in vain; I was devoured by a furious rage. Hate of the master-mason possessed me; I wished him now all the evil that he had wished to do to me; I sought by what means I could injure him and revenge myself. Every thing else was indifferent to me. I inwardly demanded the aid of the good God against my enemy. Reflection, instead of calming me, excited my bad thoughts more and more. My rancor was like an abyss which increased in depth the more I gave way to it. If I slept from time to time it was to dream angry dreams. Sometimes I saw Master Fèrou ruined, with the beggar's sack upon his shoulder; sometimes I had him under my feet, where he held me, and I forced him to cry for mercy; at other times I saw him with bound

hands between four gendarmes, who led him to the prison for thieves while I showered upon him insults and jeers.

In the midst of these nightmares I was awakened with a start by Genevieve. I sat upright in bed; a great light shone into our dwelling; we heard outside a tumult of voices, the noise of people who seemed to be running. Then the cry "To the fire!" resounded. I jumped from the end of the bed, hastily dressed, and went out. Two men came running along the street.

"Where is the fire?" I asked.

"At the yard of Jean Fèrou," they responded, both together.

I suddenly stopped. One would have said that God had heard my prayers, and that he had taken it upon himself to revenge me. I must confess it now, the first feeling was that of satisfaction; but it lasted no longer than a flash; almost at once I felt remorse for my joy. With the return of better feeling it seemed to me that I was more obliged than any one else to help the master-mason and to compensate by action my evil wishes. This idea was like a flame darting through my heart. I ran at

once with the people who were passing and reached Fèrou's yard.

The fire, at first confined to a shed, had soon spread. At the moment of my arrival the piles of beams and battens formed around the house a circle of flame which hindered approach. Workmen ran in the midst of the smoke taking away the burning material. I joined them, and we finally cleared a passage. Reaching the house, we found it locked. Some one cried that Jean Fèrou ought to be with his brother at Andilly, but many others responded that they recognized him that same evening in the village; one of them had even seen him enter, as he said, with "a drop of tea in his head and a bottle under the arm." Drunk and asleep, he had, without doubt, heard nothing.

Meanwhile the danger became more and more pressing. The fire, which was extending from behind, had passed already to the roof of the house. We knocked in vain at the closed door; we called the master-mason with all the strength of our lungs; there was no response! At this moment there was above our heads a frightful cracking, and the loosened

tiles began to fall with a shower of embers. The roof had fallen; every body fled. Jean Fèrou, at last awakened, appeared at one of the windows.

Surprised in his drunkenness, and still confused, he looked out with exclamations of fright without seeming to comprehend his plight. Every body shouted to him at the same time to come down and flee; but the unhappy man, beside himself, continued to watch the flames which ran across the yard, repeating in a lamenting accent, "The fire! the fire!"

Two or three of us decided to return to the house. The fire began already to break through the floors. We shouted to the master-mason that the least delay would cost him his life. He seemed finally to comprehend, for he quickly re-entered, as if he had decided to reach the door, and we drew near to aid him. From the sparks which gushed across the shutters of the ground-floor we saw that the flames had invaded at the same time both the lower story as well as the upper. Jean Fèrou soon re-appeared at the window, crying that the stairs were on fire and demanded a ladder.

Some ran to seek one; but in the midst of this disorder and destruction it seemed doubtful if they could find it in time. The fire on the lower story increased rapidly; instead of snapping the flames began to roar in the interior like a furnace. Jean Fèrou, loaded with papers and bags of money, was astride the window-sill, crying for some one to aid him in descending; but those who were nearest remained immovable through fright or lack of power. All at once I felt myself seized with a courageous spirit; the idea of the danger disappeared, and I only saw that there was a man to be saved.

I ran to one of the windows of the ground floor, and by the aid of a shutter I reached the cornice of the first story. There my shoulders were almost on a level with the feet of the master-mason; I cried to him to let them serve him as a point of support. Fèrou, whom the situation had sobered, did not need to be told a second time. Drawing his legs through the window, he slipped down upon me. His weight at first made me lose my balance; I tottered, but, clutching at the wall, I sunk my nails in the joints of the stones, to which I held by a

strong effort, and the mason, using my body for a ladder, reached the ground without accident.

It was only when I had rejoined him that he recognized me. He started back several steps, carried his hand to his head, and after having stammered some words which I could not understand seated himself upon the remains of a charred beam which still smoked. So many events in quick succession had astounded him; he was without strength to express himself or to give thanks. Perhaps he also lacked the will. Jean Fèrou had a heart whose sentiments were as difficult to draw out as the angles in a stone. Even not to treat you as an enemy required an effort. His wife had been obliged to leave him after eighteen years of torment and of patience; his children had sought outside of his home the bread of strangers, and of all those with whom he had worked and lived not one was his friend. Under obligations to me after the fire in his timber-yard, he refrained from injuring me; but that was all. When I met him he passed along as if he had not seen me; if any one spoke to him of me he said nothing, or suddenly left;

the bear had simply quit biting without becoming tamed.

Happily the witnesses of the service rendered compensated me for this coldness. They told how I had conducted myself with the master-mason, and they felt all the more goodwill when they learned at the same time what I had suffered from him the previous evening. Simply doing my duty appeared like generosity, and every one paid me in esteem what Jean Fèrou had refused me in gratitude.

After having struggled two years the master-mason suddenly left the country without saying any thing, and I have never heard him mentioned since.

Soon a son and a daughter consoled us for the loss of our first child. Love, joy, comfort, and health formed the four corners of our home. Genevieve sang all the day; the little ones grew and prattled; the money came of itself to our box; good luck shone upon us like a cloudless sun. I can say that this time was the happiest of all my life, for it was then that I best felt God's kindness. At length one gets accustomed to happiness and claims it as the

payment of a debt, instead of receiving it as a gift; but then I was not spoiled by providence; I had still upon my lips the bitterness of pain and misery, which made me feel all the better the good taste of the bread of prosperity.

CHAPTER XIII.

PROSPEROUS YEARS.

THE first five years of our establishment at Montmorency have not left many recollections. I simply recall that work became more and more plentiful, and those who had the appearance of scorning me when I first came no longer passed me without carrying their hands to their hats. I was thenceforth a personage in the country. Having leased the building-yard of my old competitor I was established there with Genevieve. We had carpeted the house, repainted the old ceilings, hung the windows with white curtains, planted Bengal roses on both sides of the door. One corner of the lot had been set off into a garden. There my wife planted flowers and dried her linen; she had caught there a stray swarm of bees which at length gave us many hives. Our son and daughter grew like poplars, running among our flower-borders and singing in a way to silence the birds. Tranquillity and

happiness had settled upon our home. I recollect this time only by a vexation which very soon became a pleasure.

It was at the birth of the little Marianne. We had for neighbor a Paris lady worth one hundred thousand francs, and good in proportion—a true providence for all who approached her. I had built walls in her park to her entire satisfaction, and she had, besides, taken a liking for Genevieve, who had laundered her linen. So two or three months before the birth of the little one she asked to be its godmother—an offer which the mother and I gratefully accepted. The child came into the world with good promise of living; and I was in the happiness of the first moment when Mauricet visited us. I had not seen the master-workman since his unhappy experience in Paris; but I knew that the contractor who employed him had made his place comfortable, and that he had once more taken up life with a good heart. Indeed, I found him as talkative, as jovial, and as active as in his best days; age had simply made him a little stouter. He embraced us again and again, and could not keep from weeping.

"I have seen your yard," he said to me, both hands resting upon my shoulders, with his humid eyes close to mine; "it seems that you are making things go, my boy. You are making provisions for the winter of old age. That is well, my fine fellow! The success of friends does me good!"

I answered him that every thing, indeed, went forward as I wished, and I rapidly explained to him my position. He listened to me, seated near the bed of Genevieve, our little Jacques upon his knees, and looking at the new arrival which slept in its cradle.

"Well, hurrah!" he cried, when I had finished; "brave people ought to prosper; that does honor to the good God! I wanted to know where you were, and that is why I have asked of the patron a few holidays."

"So you will remain with us," said Genevieve, with a visible satisfaction.

"If that is what you wish," replied Mauricet. "I have come only to see you. After so long a separation I hungered and thirsted for you."

He took me again by the hands.

"And then," he added, turning toward my wife, "I knew that there was a little one in the

cradle, and I have nursed an idea—an idea which has rejoiced me for three months."

"What idea?" asked Genevieve.

"That of bringing you a godfather for the infant."

"A godfather?"

"And behold him!" he finished, slapping his breast. "You will never find one of better will, nor one who loves you more."

Genevieve could not restrain an uneasy movement, and we exchanged glances; Mauricet noticed it.

"Have I come too late?" he demanded. "Have you already chosen?"

"A godfather—no," stammered the mother; "we have only a godmother."

"Then that is right," resumed the master-workman. "You will present her to me. Meeting you again here, you see, gives me a taste for mirth. We must enjoy ourselves to the utmost! I wish a model baptism, with sugar-plums and rabbit stew. Ah! come now, the godmother is not disagreeable at least?"

I replied with a little embarrassment that it was Madame Lefort, our rich neighbor.

"A lady!" repeated Mauricet; "excuse her insignificance a little. Here is an honor! Then I must know how to carry myself. But be calm; I know how to have a certain style upon occasions. I will buy a pair of knit gloves!"

We had not had time to reply when the neighbor herself entered. I was for a moment speechless; Genevieve raised herself in bed. The position became truly embarrassing. It was becoming still more so, when Madame Lefort recalled the promise which she had made us, and declared that she had come to have an understanding with us in regard to the godfather.

"What!" exclaimed Mauricet, straightening himself; "a godfather? Present! I have come for that from Burgundy. Is this madame whom I see and who ought to be my friend? I am delighted with the favor! We must have an understanding about the sugar-plums."

Madame Lefort looked at us in astonishment. Genevieve had become very red, and picked at the down of her coverlet without daring to raise her eyes. There was a continued silence,

during which Mauricet, who noticed nothing, trotted Jacques upon his knee to the familiar ditty:

"To Paris, to Paris,
Upon a horse of gray;
To Rouen, to Rouen,
Upon a horse of brown."

"This changes every thing," the neighbor finally said in a tone a little dry. "I came to propose naming the infant with my brother, the prefect's counsel. I was not aware that you had made your choice without my knowledge."

"Let madame excuse us," I responded; "we had thought of no one; it is the master-workman, who, in arriving, just now made us the proposition."

"And we intended to speak to madame," added Genevieve.

"Wait a minute," interrupted Mauricet; "I do not wish to inconvenience any one. What I have said was from affection. I would have liked to name the little one, seeing that a god-daughter is half a daughter; but my good-will ought not to do him harm, and if Peter Henry finds a better he must not inconvenience himself."

He was slowly getting up; the jovial expression on his good face had disappeared. Genevieve and I made together a gesture to retain him; we had taken our resolution with the same heart."

"Stay!" I exclaimed; "one can never find a better than an old friend like you."

"Especially as Madame Lefort knows you," added Genevieve.

And turning toward the neighbor with a supplicating smile, "It is the brave Mauricet," she continued, "the old-time tutor of Peter Henry, of whom I have often spoken to madame; he who has helped him, after God, to be an honest man. When Mother Madeleine died he led the mourners, and when we were married he led us to the church. In happiness, as in sadness, he has always been with us. Madame will comprehend that he has a right to continue his profession of protector toward our children."

"You are right," said Madame Lefort, whose face had regained its serenity; "the new friends ought not to usurp the place of the old. Monsieur Mauricet, we shall name her together."

"Well, then," cried the master-mason, touched even to tears, "I will say that you are a brave woman! But you shall not regret what you have done, for if I am in the rough, like the wood not yet squared, I know what one owes to well-born people. Madame has nothing to fear; she shall be satisfied with me."

The neighbor smiled and changed the conversation. She showed herself very polite with Mauricet, who, after her departure, declared that she was the queen of great people. In regard to us, he pressed our hands in his own with an expression of gratitude which affected me.

"Thanks, friends," he said to us in a voice full of feeling; "if I should live a hundred years you shall see that I will never forget this hour! You have not been ashamed of your old comrade, and you have risked for him the loss of a rich patronage. It was brave, it was just. God will recompense you."

The baptism passed off to the satisfaction of every body. Mauricet had the manners of a prefect, and Madame Lefort displayed no discomfort at such a godfather.

After some days passed with us the master-workman went away satisfied with every body. We wept a little in saying adieu, Mauricet expecting no more to see us. "And now we are to be separated until the last judgment," he said; "no matter, the last meeting will have been happy. This is not so common a thing, you know, that of meeting after a long absence and separating again without having any thing to awaken reproach on one side or the other. You are on the highway to fortune, child; do not force the relays, and keep on the road, looking out for the ruts. I leave you here a little Christian who shall remind you of me. And you, Peter Henry, who write as easily as one speaks, do not be lazy; send me, from time to time, a letter telling me about your home; since the devil has invented writing it is necessary to serve him well!"

He embraced us again, returned to the cradle of his goddaughter, to look at her sleeping, then departed.

The kind of presentiment which he had on leaving us was realized; I never saw him afterward, though he lived, thank God, long years. From time to time workmen

brought me verbal news with little presents for Marianne. The good mason was, they said, always brave with the work and warm for his friends; the contractor who had seen his capability left him master of his part of the business. Mauricet thus grew old, happy and useful, without ever believing that he had merited a better position; he was, as they say, a simple heart who had no idea of making the divisions of life over again after the good God. There came a year when I heard, simply, of his sudden sickness and end. He had come to the building-yard less stout-hearted than commonly, had been drenched by a rain-storm without quitting work, and, taken with a fever in the evening, he had breathed his last sigh the next day. Soldier of work, he had died, so to speak, upon the field of battle.

It was hard news for us. Genevieve loved him with a special friendship; she made the little Marianne wear mourning for him. He was the last witness of our youth who had gone; he was our last relative by adoption whom they put under the earth. Now, our family began with us; our children, little by little, would replace us; we had entered the

decline at the bottom of which opens the gate of the cemetery. Happily, one does not linger over these ideas. Men live, as the world turns, under the will of God. It is for him to think and for us to submit ourselves.

Jacques and Marianne grew without giving us care and without feeling it; it was the good humor of the house. The boy already went among the workmen and learned by looking at them; the little girl followed her mother everywhere as if she needed to see her, to laugh with her, and to embrace her.

Meanwhile, Madame Lefort took her away from us at times. She, too, had a daughter, who had conceived a warm friendship for Marianne, and would only play or work with her. Every day the child came with some new present; it was fruit, a plaything, jewelry even. More than one envied us these generosities; as for me, I was grateful for them, but simply because of the friendship which they proved; I was happier for the caresses of our little neighbor than for her gifts.

To tell the truth, Madame Lefort had not any false pride. Our child was always treated as the equal of her daughter, to whom even she

often offered her as an example. All progressed happily up to the time when M. Lefort accepted duties which forced him to return to Paris. On learning that she was going to leave Marianne his daughter broke into loud cries; they had to make her many promises; nothing could console her. Finally, the day before departure, Madame Lefort came to us while we were at supper; she was followed by a chamber-maid who left after having set down a box. Our neighbor sought a pretext to have the children go out, and when we were alone,

"I have come to talk with you of serious things," she said; "do not begin by answering, and listen to me with all your heart and all your reason."

We promised her.

"I have no need to speak to you of the attachment of Caroline for Marianne," she resumed; "you have witnessed it, and you have been able to judge. My daughter is accustomed to live most of the time with yours; she needs her to learn how to be happy. Since she has been in fear of separation she has had no more taste for any thing; she refuses

all work and all pleasure; one would say that a part of her life had been taken away."

Genevieve interrupted her to express her gratitude for such an affection.

"If it is true that you are grateful to her," continued Madame Lefort, "you can prove it; your daughter is to Caroline a sister by choice; permit that she become a veritable sister."

"How is that?" I demanded.

"By confiding her to us," she replied.

And as she saw that we both started she exclaimed:

"Ah, recollect your promise; you have engaged to listen to me to the end. I do not come proposing to tear Marianne from your love, but simply to let her accept ours. The question is not of taking her away from her family; we wish to give her a second. I shall have a child the more without your having one the less, for all your rights shall remain to you, and your daughter shall return to you as often as you wish."

Genevieve and I spoke together, raising objections.

"Wait," Madame Lefort interrupted anew;

"let me tell you every thing. What you wish, above all—is it not true?—is the happiness of your child; your dearest wish is to assure her a tranquil future? Well, then, I take this obligation upon me. Not only shall Marianne receive the same education as my daughter, and divide all her diversions, but I engage myself to assure her position, to give her a dowry. I have only one daughter, and I am rich enough to give myself this pleasure."

The proposition was so extraordinary, so unexpected, that we were troubled; she perceived it, and, rising, "Reflect," she said; "I do not want to surprise you; to-morrow you will give me your answer. I will then take measures that my promises shall become a formal and written engagement."

Genevieve seized her hand and wished to say how much she was touched by such kindness.

"Do not thank me," continued Madame Lefort; "what I do is for my daughter much more than for yours; in acquiring for her a devoted companion I shall enrich her. You will find in this box one of Caroline's dresses; it is designed for her adopted sister. I feel

how this explanation has moved you; I, myself, you see, have scarcely been able to keep from weeping; so I desire to avoid a second talk upon this subject. If you decide to accept my proposition bring Marianne to me tomorrow in her new costume; this shall be a proof that Caroline can regard her as a sister; otherwise, spare my poor child and myself the grief of adieus."

At these words she saluted us with her hand and went out. I remained motionless before the door with lowered head and hanging arms. Genevieve dropped upon a chair, covered her face with her apron and began to sob. We remained so a long time, saying nothing, but comprehending each other by our silence. The same combat was going on in both our hearts. In spite of what Madame Lefort had been able to say we well felt that in confiding Marianne to her we renounced the best part of our rights, that the child changed her family and that we could no more than hope to keep the second place in her affection; but the advantages proposed were great. However prosperous for the time my position was I knew, by experience, that one hour or another

could change every thing. A failure had only to compromise my credit, a sickness to derange my affairs, my death to expose those who survived me to poverty. What Madame Lefort offered us was painful for Genevieve and myself, but profitable for Marianne. If, in thinking of ourselves, it was simple to refuse, in considering only our daughter it was perhaps prudent to consent. This last idea finished by persuading us. After all, parents live for their children, not for themselves. Each one of us had made these reflections, and when we came to converse we had both of us reached the same conclusion. Genevieve wept; although I was no more courageous I endeavored to strengthen her.

"Let us be calm," I said to her, in a low tone, for fear of weeping too; "the question is not of weakening but of doing our duty. Why afflict ourselves if our child will be happy? Rather thank God for giving us the occasion of a sacrifice to her profit; it is proof that he esteems and loves us."

However, I did not sleep well this night, and I got up the next morning at early daybreak; Genevieve was already up preparing

the clothing brought the evening before by Madame Lefort. She made no complaint, expressed no regret; she had a brave nature, and never questioned that which she believed necessary. When Marianne awoke she began to dress her silently in her new costume. The little girl appeared at first surprised; she wished to know why they gave her these fine clothes of a demoiselle; and as her mother, who had finished dressing her, wished to press her a last time in her arms, she drew herself away, warning her not to muss her collaret.

Genevieve gave a feeble cry and broke into tears. I myself had trembled; a curtain was torn from my eyes. I took the child by the hand, I made her quickly enter the next room, and I turned toward the mother, who continued to weep.

"Listen," I said to her, in a low voice, "we have decided to give away the child for her own interest; but we must know in wishing to be useful to her that we are not doing her an injury."

"Ah, you have seen, then, as I have," stammered Genevieve.

"I have seen," I replied, "that the fine

dress has made her forget that she is going to live far from us, and that vanity already smothers her heart."

"She loves her toilet better than my kisses," said the mother, redoubling her tears.

"And this is only a beginning," I added. "We can by great sacrifice deprive ourselves of the child that we love, but not consent to its spoiling. I do not wish that Marianne shall become richer if the condition is that she shall become bad. Yesterday we saw only one side of the thing, that of interest; there is another more grave, that of morality. In living like a lady the child will forget very quickly whence she came; who knows if the time will not come when she will be ashamed of us? This cannot be, this shall not be! Go, take away her costume, Genevieve, and remain her mother, in order that she may remain worthy of being your daughter."

The poor woman threw herself into my arms and ran and undressed the little one. We let Madame Lefort depart without saying adieu, as she had asked us; but I wrote to explain to her as well as possible our position. She did not reply, and we have had no more communi-

cation with her. She could not, doubtless, pardon us our refusal.

In the meantime, the architect to whom I owed my position at Montmorency continued well-inclined toward me. He gave me all the work which he could and neglected no occasion to increase my profits. I regarded him as the true author of my success, and I wished nothing so much as to see him prosper. Unhappily, he was a man whom pleasure enticed. Confident in his skill and his activity, he believed he was able to meet every thing, and never took any account with his fancies. The summer-house which he had built had become the rendezvous of a brilliant society. There were only gala days and feastings, without speaking of gambling and card-playing. I soon noticed that his affairs were getting embarrassed. He deferred payments, asked advances, accepted all the business he could. His credit suffered at first, then his reputation. They spoke in a whisper of his overcharges, of bribes received. I repulsed these accusations as calumnies. For my part I had always found M. Duprè easy in business, but loyal.

A Parisian company had confided to him for

two years the direction of a brick-field and certain quarries, the working of which had reached, thanks to his activity, great proportions. Yet the enterprise, prosperous in appearance, had not realized, so far, any profit. Those interested supposed that the frequent and forced absences of M. Duprè favored the dishonesty of some inferior employee. They thought that an oversight of the details was indispensable, and proposed this to me. Before accepting I wished to consult M. Duprè himself. He appeared embarrassed, but after having hesitated some seconds, "If it is not Peter Henry it will be some other," he said, as if to himself. "I had better do business with an acquaintance than with a stranger."

He advised me, then, to accept, but counseled me not to trouble myself beyond measure, to let things follow their course, and in any case to do nothing without informing him.

I immediately entered upon my new duty. The workings appeared to me in excellent shape, well equipped and vigorously conducted. In seeing the organization of the business I could not comprehend why it had not given more satisfactory results. Curiosity led me at

first to seek the cause, then honesty obliged me to pursue it. From the first examination I had detected considerable embezzlements. I succeeded in drawing up a list and estimating the value; they amounted to a sum in the neighborhood of twenty thousand francs. Troubled by my sad discovery, I went to see M. Duprè, to whom I communicated it. At the first word he made an exclamation. I believed that he doubted, and I put under his eyes all the proofs. When I had finished he asked if I suspected any one. I answered that I did not; the thing had happened before my entrance into the business.

"Then do not speak of it to any one," he said, quickly. "Act as if you were ignorant of every thing. Remember, you have seen nothing."

I raised my eyes, stupefied. He was very pale, and his hands trembled. A frightful ray of light crossed my mind. I recoiled in regarding him. He carried his clenched hand to his forehead with despair. I could not restrain a cry.

"Keep quiet, unhappy one," he resumed, in a tone which frightened me. "This is only a

momentary irregularity. My affairs will re-establish themselves, and I will make good the loss to the interested parties. But remember that the least indiscretion may ruin me!"

He explained to me then at length the embarrassment in which he found himself, unfolded all his plans to me, and made a list of his resources. I listened to him, but without understanding. I was astounded. I only regained my presence of mind when he asked me to continue and not too closely examine things for some weeks. The sense of my responsibility came back to me then in full force, and I comprehended that my situation was dreadful.

"Excuse me," I replied, stammeringly, "I can ignore that which was confided to others, but not that which has been put under my care. From to-day I shall abandon my place of overseer."

"So they will give me another who will make the same discoveries and who will hold me at his mercy," exclaimed the architect, bitterly. "I hoped to find in you more accommodation, Peter Henry, and, above all, more memory."

"Ah, do not think that I have forgotten any thing, sir," I cried, stirred to the bottom of the heart. "I know that I owe all to you and that what I have belongs to you."

He started impulsively.

"Do not take what I say for words," I added, more loudly. "By uniting my resources I can have in a few days twelve thousand francs. In the name of God, take them! You must endeavor to procure the rest and free yourself."

I wrung my hands. M. Duprè remained some time without responding. He was himself very agitated. At last he said to me, with despondency, "It is impossible. I thank you, Peter Henry, but it is too late. I should ruin you without saving myself. You do not know all."

He stopped himself. I dared not look at him, and I could not speak. He resumed, after a silence, "Do what you wish. Give your resignation. All I ask of you is silence concerning that which you would not have known."

He took leave of me with a gesture, and I went away much troubled.

About a month later a great enterprise was proposed to me which would take me to Bur-

gundy. What had happened with M. Duprè decided me to accept it. The sight of him rendered me unhappy, and the secret which I held made me tremble. In going away it seemed to me I should leave that behind. Unhappily, others came to know it. I learned soon after that all had been discovered, and that at the thought of public dishonor my old patron had lost his head and killed himself.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN AGE STEALS ON.

IT is a long while since this journal of my recollections was interrupted. The lines written upon the last page have had time to blanch; and I, I have whitened too, like them, without perceiving it. The foundation walls are still solid, but the building has lost its appearance of youth. Genevieve herself is no more what she was; the wrinkles have come at the corners of her eyes. Happily what remains to her makes the cheerfulness of the home—good health and a good heart. Besides, if we decline there are those near us who mount up; the children are here and will replace us; it is for them now that the sun shines. Life resembles a ball; when one is too old to dance he looks at the others, and their joy makes his heart laugh.

This is the word of Genevieve. At each pleasure lost she consoles herself with the pleasures of the daughter and of the young

people. Their good teeth replace the teeth which she lacks, and their black locks hinder her seeing her own gray hair. People who live alone never know this happiness. The entire world has the appearance of declining with them, and every thing here below ends in their grave. But for those who have a family nothing is finished, for all recommences; children continue even to the judgment-day! I sometimes asked myself, in my unhappier hours, What profit comes of living rightly? Now, there is one at least which I know—that is, the power of growing old with impunity. In youth it costs something, at times, to do one's duty; the effort is dull and the day long; but later, when age has cooled the blood, one gathers what he has sown. Our efforts pay us in good reputation, in comfort, in security, and our well-being, even, becomes like a certificate of honor.

Then the family is here which benefits by our past, joyfully receiving the returns of all our by-gone sufferings; if there were no other recompense this should suffice, and whatever God had required we would be able to hold him released. For my part, I ask nothing.

Here are the children, who have grown without sickness, who love us, and who have good hopes. What more could be asked? Jacques is already the best master-mason of the country; he will yet prove that he will not make the worst contractor. Yesterday they put the cap-sheaf upon the little viaduct, the construction of which was confided to him, and the engineer, who rarely praises, confesses that it is well done. As for Marianne, she has replaced her mother for many months in the laundry. Genevieve is sure that all will go well when she takes a hand, the workwomen sing the louder and work not less vigorously. It is only the young who know how thus to season work with gayety.

God be blessed for having put both in such a good way! At one time I trembled, for they also have had their temptations, Jacques above all, who was on the point of turning up another road and escaping us.

Jacques has become the first workman of the country. No one else measures a piece of work at the first look, and the best accountant cannot make a calculation quicker. Besides this, a good companion, easy at laugh-

ing, but with a firm hand when it is necessary ; a true leader of men, and who knows how to get along without being led.

Marianne is always the same good girl, who sings, who laughs, who embraces you, and does every thing easily. I seem to see in her her mother as I saw her the first time. Wherever she is she is like a ray of the sun. The great Nicholas, our overseer, has noticed her ; she is a brave worker, for whom we shall easily find a place in some family ; so I shall say nothing and let her go. To-day she has left with every body for a festival at the village. This is why I am alone, and this is why I have brought myself to write these pages.

These shall be the last, for the rest of the book has served for accounts. My pen has got to the end of the white paper. I must, then, say adieu to my adventures of the past, but not to the recollections which they have left. These recollections, I have them here around me, living and transformed, but always present. First, it is Genevieve, it is the daughter and the boy, it is the comfort within and the good reputation without. When I shall have nothing to relate you shall be able to

read every thing here. The confessions of the workman are most often written in his home itself, sad or joyful, comfortable or miserable, according as he has taken his life by the good or bad side; for with all men old age is what their youth and middle age have made it.

THE END.

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